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THIRTY ^{6.30}
SERMONS

PREACHED ON

Several Occasions.

To which are added,

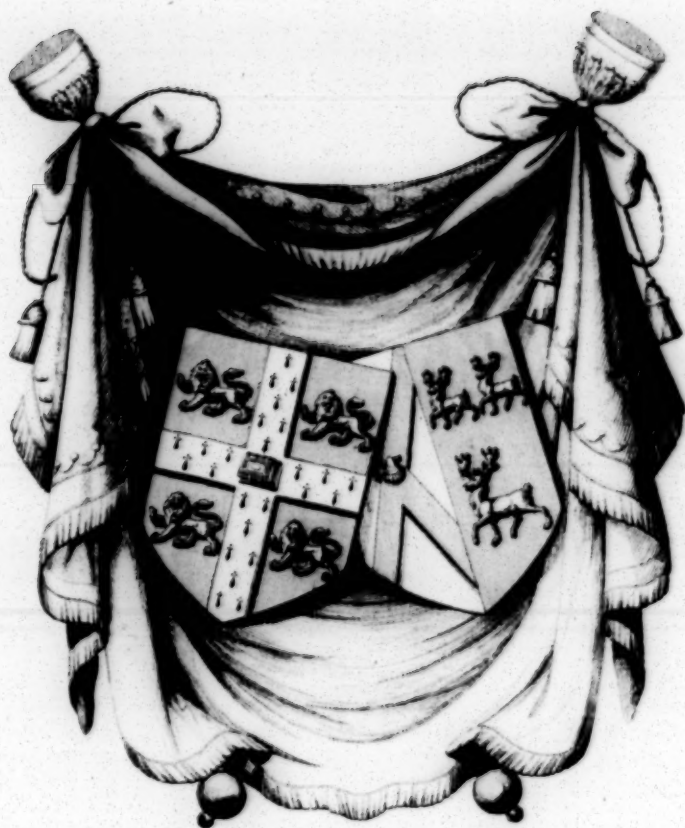
Three SERMONS of the Be-
ing of GOD, and the Truth of
the CHRISTIAN RELIGION. Never
before printed.

By EDWARD WAPLE. B. D.
Late Vicar of St. *Sepulchre's*, and
Archdeacon of TAUNTON.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J. DOWNING, in *Bar-*
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Academia Cantabrigiensis
Liber.

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TO THE READER.

THE Learned and Judicious Author of the following Sermons could never be prevail'd upon in his Life-Time to Publish what he had at any Time Preached; though never so much Importuned to it. None ever could be more Fealous of his own Performance, or a more severe Critick upon Himself: And it may be truly said of Him, that he as industriously avoided a Name, as any one could court it. His great Reservedness may indeed be esteemed by Some a Fault: And I deny not, but by it we have lost the Benefit of some Excellent Productions of his of Various Kinds. But he was

a Person who had so studied Human Nature, and was so well acquainted with the Springs thereof, as he found but too great Reason for his general Diffidence both of Himself and of the rest of Mankind.

As he was therefore a Man known but to a Few, and hardly perhaps thoroughly to Any, the Discourses here Published will not receive any Weight from the Reputation of a Name, but must derive it wholly from their own Intrinsic Worth. It is upon this Bottom only that the Publication of them is made. And if what is in this Volume contain'd shall be able to stand the Test upon a fair Examination; and be found to answer those Good Ends, for which they have been so earnestly solicited to come Abroad by such as are Competent Judges in the Matter; there may follow Somewhat yet more Considerable, and which he really intended for the Press.

As to the Sermons, they are faithfully Printed from Transcripts corrected with his own Hand. These Transcripts were taken some few Years before his Death by his Order and Direction, on occasion of the Badness of his Hand, and the growing Defect

Defect of his Eye-sight, by which, without this Help, they must have been lost even to Himself.

The Sermons added to this Impression are printed from Transcripts made by the Reverend Author's appointment, and written with the same Hand those formerly published were. There is only this difference, that the Sermons being short, it was judged proper to put two of them together. So that the Sermons now added, considered as preached by the Author, are no fewer than six.

As for the Time and Occasion when they were Preached, there is nothing at all to be learnt by any Memorandum that could be found. Concerning the XXIXth and XXXth, it indeed appears that One was Preached on a Whitsunday, and the Other on a Trinity-Sunday; but in what Year we are altogether in the Dark. Also that which is the XXVIIIth in this Collection, was Preached first Ad Clerum, upon 2 Tim. III. 17. and afterwards adapted to his Congregation by the Parallel Text, Coloss. I. 28. Some of these Sermons are certainly Shorter than they were Preached: And possibly there may be some other Defects observed in them, which

are common to all Compositions of this Nature, even by the most celebrated Pens, when designed only for the Pulpit, and principally for Helps to Memory. But these Defects are not so Considerable, but they are otherwise sufficiently made up. Had the Author himself ever thought of Revising them for the Press, they had doubtless appeared with far greater Advantages than now they do.

As for the Author, of whom some Account might be here expected, as he was careful that his Life should be indeed hidden from the World; and as certain Private Memoirs of his Own Life, written by Himself (wherewith he acquainted an Intimate Friend in Confidence some Years before his Death) were probably destroy'd by him, together with some other Valuable Papers, when he began to apprehend the Approach of his Dissolution, lest it might happen that some or other might make a Bad Use of them; since they are not now to be Found, after the strictest Search made for them; the Reader must be contented, without having the Veil drawn from That which was hid with Christ in God, with that most Authentick Testimony which he hath left of Himself, in his Last Will and Testament; wherein is to be seen the
true

true Picture of his Mind. The Preamble of which is as follows:

In the Name of God Amen, I *Edward Waple*, Clerk and Vicar of *St. Sepulchre's* Parish in *London* and *Middlesex*, being through God's Mercy in Health of Mind and Body, but sensible of Mortality, do make, ordain and constitute this my Last Will and Testament, revoking all others whatsoever: *First*, I commend my Self, whole Spirit, Soul and Body, into the Hands of God, humbly beseeching Him, through Christ our Blessed Redeemer, to be Merciful to me at the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment. I profess my self to die in the Belief of the Christian Faith, and in Consent to its righteous, just, and holy Laws, deploring my manifold Breaches of them, and earnestly begging Forgiveness at the Hands of God and Man. I profess my self to be in Union of Charity with the whole Catholick Church of Christ, and in desire of External Communion with it (as I am at present with the Church of *England*, one Part of it) but lamenting its Imperfections and Divisions, and the manifold Deviations of the whole Church from its true Pattern; and earnestly desiring, waiting for, and expecting a purer Church-State, and the glorious Kingdom

dom of Christ; even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly. I desire to be Buried (if it may conveniently be) in the Outward Chappell of St. John Baptist's College in Oxford, Decently, but without any Funeral Pomp, which I always disliked; and that a Marble Tablet be fixed on the Wall near my Grave, with this Inscription:

Hic jacet Edvardus Waple, hujus Collegii quondam socius, Christi Minister indignissimus, suo Merito peccatorum maximus, Dei Gratiâ Pœnitentium minimus: inveniat Misericordiam in Illo Die.

Stet Lector Pœnitentialis hæc Tabella.

That is, Here lyeth

EDWARD WAPLE, Sometime Fellow of this College, a most unworthy Minister of Christ:

By his own Merit, The Greatest of Sinners:

By God's Grace, The Least of Penitents.

May he find Mercy in That Day!

Reader, Let this Penitential Tablet abide.

Now whereas he had already given to the said College the Sum of Three Hundred and Fifty

Fifty Pounds, to maintain a Preaching Lecture, for the Advantage of Young Students in Divinity, Fellows thereof; He further gave and bequeathed to them at his Death the Sum of CCCL Pounds more, to maintain a Catechetical Lecture in the said College, after the Method and Manner of the Catechetical Lecture which is settled in Baliol College in the said University; to be Paid them so soon as they have Agreed upon the Purchase of an Estate on Land of the Value of the aforesaid Sum of Seven Hundred Pound. And when the College hath purchased such an Estate in Land, and procured both those Lectures to be ratified by the Visitor, he willed also that Five Hundred Pounds more should be paid by his Executor to the aforesaid College, in order to Purchase the perpetual Advowson or Presentation to a Benefice Cure of Souls; earnestly requesting and beseeching them to dispose of the said Benefice, when it should fall, to such an one only of the Fellows of the said College, as they should verily believe in their Consciences to be duly Qualified for so weighty an Office and Work as the Cure of Souls. And for this End he made it his Request, that That Clause of his Will, by which this Donation is enforced, should be entred into the Register of the said College, and be read whensoever the said Benefice is to be disposed of.

And whereas London had been the Place of his Birth, School-Education, and Ministry,
out

out of a grateful Remembrance of the Favours he had therein received from God, he gave a very large and curious Collection of Books, which at great Expence he had been for several Years amassing, to the Library of Sion College in this City; desiring the President and Governours of that College to accept thereof, and to sell those Books of which they should have already better Duplicates, and to purchase other Books with the Money they should receive for those of his, which they should think fit to part with. He also gave Two Hundred Pounds towards Repairing and Beautifying the Inside of St. Sepulchre's Church; and One Hundred Pound to be distributed amongst Twenty poor Inhabitants of that Parish. And he gave Threescore Pounds per Annum to the Parish of St. Sepulchre's after the Death of a near Relation, in case he dy'd without Issue.

He fell Asleep in the Lord on the 8th of June, Ann. 1712. being Whitsunday, in the Sixty-fifth Year of his Age; and his Body was interred the Saturday following, June 14. in the Outward Chappel of St. John Baptist College, according to his Last Request; a Tablet with the Inscription abovesaid being afterward set up by his Kinsman and Executor Mr. Robert Waple.



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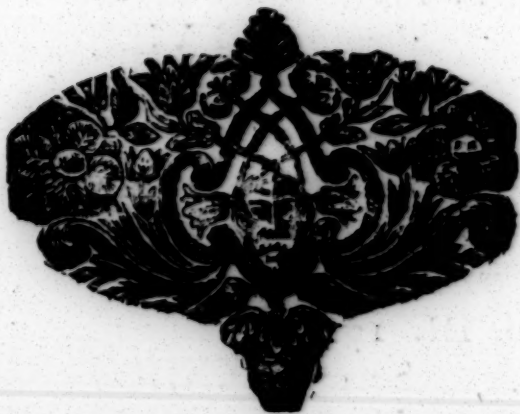
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SERMON





SERMON I.

St. JOHN Chap. V. 39.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think
ye have Eternal Life, and they are they
which testify of me.*



THESE Words are a Command of our Saviour to the *Jews*, and by Consequence much more to us Christians, to search the Scriptures, that rich Store-house of all saving Truth. For if they were to search the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that out of them they might learn what they were to believe concerning the *Messias*, and Eternal Life; how much more are we obliged to search the New Testament as well as the Old, since that latter Revelation of the Gospel has more clearly explained to us the former, and given us more plain Testimonies of Christ, and clearer Manifestations of God's Will?

I shall therefore, to excite you to the Diligent reading of the Scriptures, and to obviate such Objections, as are, or may be made, to draw you off from resting upon this sure and

B

certain

certain Rule of your Faith, briefly discourse these Things. I shall shew that searching of the Scriptures was commanded,

1. By God in the Old Testament.
2. By Christ, and his Apostles, in the New.
3. By the whole Christian Church, until some latter degenerate Ages of it.

And lastly, That there is great Reason for it, and none against it.

We have in these Words,

1. A Duty, meekly to receive the Word of God.
2. The Power and Efficacy attending it, an Ability to save Men's Souls.

It hath been the constant Custom of the People of God, ever since Divine Revelation hath been imparted unto them, in all Ages of the World, to receive with Humility, and read with Attention those sacred Records. And I have chose to discourse unto you upon this Subject, at this Time; because it was one main Reason of the Church's enjoyning more than ordinary Abstinence at this Time of *Lent*; that thereby Men might have the more leisure, and be the better capacitated for Holy Meditation and Study of the Scriptures by a strict Temperance, and that by laying aside all Filthiness and superfluity of Naugh-

Naughtiness, all excess of Diet, and superfluity of Meats and Drinks, their Minds might be the better prepared to receive, with a pure Heart, and an humble Soul, the engrafted Word of God.

All the *Jews*, of what Condition soever, were strictly commanded by *Moses*, to study the Law, and to make it the Subject of their daily Meditation. ^a *And these Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart*, i. e. in thy Mind and Memory, and thy Affections, as if they were engraven upon the fleshly Tables of thy Heart; ^b *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children*, that is, often, earnestly, and by frequent Repetitions, Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept, that so they may sink down into their Hearts, that they may understand them, and be affected by them. *Thou shalt talk of them*, when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; that is, they shall be the continual Subject of thy Meditation, and of thy Discourse, at Home and Abroad, by Night and by Day. Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy Hand, and they shall be as Frontlets between thine Eyes; thou shalt always have them in thy Mind, they shall

^a Deut. 6. 6, 7, 8.

^b Prov. 3. 3. 2 Cor. 3. 3. *Ubi vide Gregor.*

always be before thee. Thou shalt have a Love and Affection for them, as Men do to their beloved Friends, whose Names or Pictures they wear on their ^a Signets or Seals of their right Hand, to testify their great Esteem of them. And thou shalt always bear them in thy Remembrance, as Men do Things which they carry with them, or lay before them, that they might not slip out of their Minds. Nay, Thou shalt take so great Care not to forget them, that thou shalt write them upon the very ^b Posts of thy House, and upon thy Gates. Upon this Precept the *Jews* grounded the making of their Phylacteries, which were Scrowls of Parchment, in which some of the chief Precepts of the Law were written, which they wear on their Foreheads in the time of Prayer, and fasten to their Door-Posts, thereby literally performing this Precept, which was either wholly Figurative, or else Significative of the Application of Mind, which they ought to have employ'd in the Study of the ^c Law. Now this Precept was given not only to the Priests, but to all the People, to ^d all *Israel*, with a Command, that they should not only learn the Commandments of God them-

^a Grot. in Matth. 23. 5. Patr. in Cantic. 8. 6. Gataker in Jerem. 22. 24. Il. 49. 16. Et Riv. in Pol. Syn. in Exod. 3. 9.

^b Et in Exod. 17. 18

^c Ainsw. in Loc. Et in Exod. 13. 16. Et Grot. Et Hammond, in Matth. 23. 5.

^d Vers. 3, 4. Hear, O Israel.

selves,

selves, but that they should diligently teach them unto their Children. And that they might be faithfully transmitted to Posterity, the Ten Commandments were at first written *by the Finger of God* in Tables of ^a Stone; and the Authentick Copy of the Law was written in a Book by *Moses*, and put on the Side of the Ark of the Covenant, that it might be there for a Witness against them.

^b It was written, that it might be a remaining lasting Monument against them; as God commanded *Moses* to write, what he would have remembred to *Joshua*, in a Book ^c; and to write his own Song; that so it might be the better taught the Children of *Israel*. For this Cause *Joshua* wrote the Words of the Covenant in the Book of the Law of God; and the Psalmist, That what he had there deliver'd, concerning the Mercies of God, should be written for the Generation to come; that so it might be transmitted to them, and remembred by them. And when *Job* would have his Words continued to Posterity; He wishes that they had been committed to Writing, ^d *Oh that my Words were now written! Oh that they were printed in*

^a Exod. 31. 18. Deut. 10. 4. Exod. 34. 27.

^b Deut. 31. 9. *Collat. cum* 24. 25.---Et Grot. Joseph. *Antiquit.* pag. 120. (D)

^c Exod. 17. 14. Deut. 31. 19, 22. *Chap.* 24. 26. Psal. 102. 18.

^d Job 19. 23, 24.

a Book! That they were graven with an Iron Pen, and laid in a Rock for ever. This was the Way which God himself took, to have his Law faithfully transcribed, and which is agreeable to the common Practice of Mankind, who make use of ^a Writing as the most safe and surest Way; a steady and more creditable, and an unquestionable Way of Testification. All which I remark in Opposition to those, who, that they might the better discourage Men from making the Scriptures the Ground and Rule of their Faith, prefer Oral Tradition before written, and assert, that what has been once deliver'd as Matter of Faith by Word of Mouth, without Writing to one Generation, must always continue the same without any Alteration; as if it were impossible for a Truth to receive less change by being often told, than by being often written; or that no Alteration could be made by insensible and imperceptible Degrees ^b.

But howsoever God was pleased to recommend Writing as the safest Way of Conveyance, that out of That the *Jews* might be convinced, if they denied their God, ^c if they denied the Tenor and Conditions of the Covenant, they had then made; or should corrupt themselves, or turn aside

^a *Littera sunt vera Custodia fidelis, Memoria rerum gestarum*
Liv. Lib. 1. Hammond Tom. 3. 191.

^b Neh. 9. 38. *We make a sure Covenant, and write it.*

^c Josh. 24. 27. Deut. 31. 29.

from the Way which he had commanded them, thereby intimating these two Things, (1.) That a whole People, at least the Majority of them, might corrupt themselves, and turn aside from the Way which they had been taught. And, (2.) That a written Law was the best Way to remember them of their Duty, and to recal and reclaim them from their Errors and Transgressions. Yea, God commanded even the King of the *Jews* to write a Copy of this Law in a Book, that is, of the ^a whole Law, or at least of *Deuteronomy*, that he might read therein all the Days of his Life; that he may learn to fear the Lord, and to keep all the Words of this Law, and these Statutes, to do them. And that his Heart be not lifted up above his Brethren, and that he turn not aside from the Commandment to the right Hand, or to the left, and that his Days may be prolonged in his Reign, and his Children after him. He was to write the Law with his own Hand, ^b say the *Jews*; and besides the Copy of it which he had from his Fore-fathers, he was to carry this along with him when he went to War, and sat in Judgment, that he might from thence learn to fear the Lord, and observe his Judgments. And therefore we read

^a See Grotius. Deut. 17. 18.

^b *Philo. Ainsw. & Grot.*

2 Kings 11. 12. that when the King was crowned, the Priest deliver'd into his Hand the *Testimony*, or Law of God, that he might read, study, and obey it, according to the Command which God gave *Jeshua*, 1. 8. *This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy Mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein Day and Night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: For then thou shalt make thy Way prosperous, and thou shalt have good Success.*

And accordingly besides the Copy of the Law written by *Moses* himself, and kept in the Sanctuary^a, which was to be read in the Ears of the People; there was also another Copy to be transcribed out of that for the King, in which he was daily to be conversant not only in Private, but he was also according to the *Jews* to read it solemnly in the Ears of the People at the Feast of Tabernacles^b; And accordingly we read, 2 Kings 23. 2. that *Josiah* read (or^c caused to be read) in their Ears *all the Words of the Book of the Covenant which was found in the House of the Lord*^d. The King read it, that the People for the Authority and Majesty of him

^a See the Commentators on Exod. 25. 12. Deut. 17. 18, 31, 26. 2 Kings. 22. 8, 13. 2 Chron. 34. 14. 2 Kings 23. 2.

^b Deut. 31. 11. Ainsw. Grot. Poli Synopf.

^c See Comment. ^d This the Opinion of the Jews. Christian Commentators give another Sense.

that

that read it, might be the more Attentive to it^a. The *Jews* tell us that, not only the King, but^b every *Israelite*, was obliged to write out a Copy of the Law^c. Howsoever, it is certain, that Copies of it were frequent in the Hands of the People; for how else could they obey the frequent Commands of God in Scripture, requiring them to place their whole Study in them, how else could their perpetual Study be in the Law of the Lord, and how else could they Meditate in his Law Day and Night? Can we think that these Precepts required no more than a bare Hearing of the Law once a Week in their Synagogues, and only meditating upon what they had then heard all the Week after? No certainly, these Phrases must mean much more, they must denote their constant and perpetual Study in them, their reading of them, as well as meditating upon what they had heard. For thus the Prophet *Isaiab* 34. 16. calls upon the People of *Israel* to *seek out* (of) *the Book of the Lord* and read; that is, to seek diligently for a Copy of the Law, or of the Prophets, if they had not one; and when they had one, they were to read it, and consider it, and to see whether

^a Ainsw. Ubi supra. Josephus. 334. (o) & 2 Kings 22. 16. & Patrick's *Search the Scriptures*, pag. 6.

^b Grounding is in Deut. 31. 19.

^c Patrick, P. 10. Et Ainsw. ex Maimon. on Deut. 17. 18. God's

God's Judgments did not exactly agree with his Threatnings contained therein. ^a *Seck it diligently* and read it. And it was one part of the Office of those who are call'd Scribes in Scripture, to keep School, and teach the Law, the Writings of the Law ^b. And it is very probable that they were the Publick and Authentick Transcribers of the Copies of the Law for the Use of the People. For thus we read, ^c that he was a ready Scribe in the Law of *Moses*. And *David* ^d very probably alludes to some such Sort of Writers, when he says, that his Tongue was the Pen of a ready Writer. After the *Jews* returned from the *Babylonish* Captivity under *Zorobabel*, *Ezra*, a Prophet, and eminently endued with the Spirit of God, ^e gather'd together the sacred Books of Scripture which were preserved during that long and miserable Captivity ^f. These he revised, correcting what Errors might have crept into them, and digesting them into that Order of Scripture in which we now have them. These Books after their return were read ^g before all the People, both Men and Women, all that were of Years of Discretion, and could hear with ^h Understanding, for all the People

^a Grot. and Thorndic. *Of the Service of God*, pag. 43.

^b John 15. 2 Tim. 3. 15. *The Holy Writings*, How. 152.

^c Ezra 7. 6. ^d Psalm 45. 1.

^e Poli Synopf. Præfat. in Ezram. Richl. Tom. 3. p. 22.

^f 1 Kings 36. 21. Grot. in Ezram, Cap. 7. Vers. 6.

^g Nehem. 8. ^h Vers. 2.

had gather'd themselves together like ^a one Man. *Ezra* the Scribe standing upon a Pulpit of Wood, read from Morning until Even the Law, and all the People were attentive to it. Here we have the Manner of their publick Assembly, *Ezra*, one of the chief amongst them for Learning and Authority, reading the Law unto them from a high Pulpit of Wood, for he was above all the People (to which correspond the Customs of the Christian Church) that he might be the better seen and heard; all the People standing up, as the Christians did at the Reading of the New Testament, and we still do at the reading of the Gospel ^b, in token of the Reverence we owe to the gracious Words of our blessed Saviour. During the reading of the Law they stood up, and that regularly in their Places; ^c the Men and Women, according to the Custom of the *Jews*, in separate and distinct Seats and Places, (*Grot.*) and they heard very attentively. And when *Ezra* blessed the Lord, the Great God, all the People lifting up their Hands, bowed their Heads, and worshipped the Lord, with their Faces to the Ground. Natural Signs (not barely Typical, and therefore not abolish'd) of Joy, Reverence, and Devotion, and therefore to be retained in our Christian Assemblies. On each Side of *Ezra* stood the ^d Priests, to te-

^a Nehem. 8. 1.

^b Falk. p. 461.

^c *Exod.* 7. ^d *Exod.* 4.

stifie the Truth of what he delivered, and to excite the People by their Presence and Behaviour to a hearty and sincere Attention, as the Priests and Deacons used in the Ancient Christian Church ^a, to be placed on each Side of their Bishop, when he preached, and expounded the Scriptures unto the People. A venerable Sight, and no doubt of great Use, to excite the Reverence and Attention of the People.

Besides these, there were other Priests and Levites whose Names are distinctly set down ^b, who caused the People ^c to understand the Law, and the People stood in their place: That is, there being a great Congregation, the Priests and Levites dispersed themselves ^d into several Parts of the Congregation, and as the Assembly of Divines very prudently note upon this Place, they did abide there where their Ministers instructed them, they did not confusedly run up and down, one to hear this Man, and another that, but each stood in his Place, and was attentive to the Priests, whilst they caused them to understand the Law. So they read in the Book, in the Law of God distinctly, and gave the Sense, and caused them to understand the Reading.

^a *Apost. Constit. Cave's Primit. Christian.*

^b *Vers. 7.* ^c *Vers. 7, 8.*

^d *Grot., in 8. & Patrick.*

That

That is, the People through their long Captivity and heavy Bondage having forgot very much of their Native Language, they taught them to understand it, by writing it in the *Chaldee* Letters, and interpreting and explaining it in that Language which they had learnt in their Captivity ^a.

You see here that the Scriptures were read in the *Jewish* Congregations, and that they read them to them distinctly, and took great Pains to give them the Sense of them, and to cause them to understand the Reading, which they would not have done, if it had not been necessary for them to Study, Read, and Understand the Scriptures. And that in process of time there were many Copies of the Law extant, appears plainly from the ^b Story of *Antiochus*, who rent in pieces the Books of the Law which he found, and burnt them with Fire, and commanded that whosoever had the Books of the Law in his Custody should be put to Death; from whence it appears, that they were in the Custody of many, for many were kill'd on this Account. And the Scriptures being written to all, and all being concerned in them, why should we think that they were not in the Hands of all, and ought to have been read by all. They were at first

^a Walton's *Proleg.* 12. *Seff.* 4. *Præfat. in Ezram apud Polum, & Poli Syn. in Neh.* 8. 7.

^b In *Josephus*, 410. (A) *Et.* 1. *Macc.* 1. 57.

written in a Language understood by all, the Vulgar as well as the Learned; and afterwards we see when the common People had forgot their Language in the Captivity, it was again diligently taught them, by the Lessons, Paraphrases, and Expositions of the Priests and Levites. The Law was deliver'd to all the People, it was read and expounded unto them, in their solemn Publick Congregations and commanded to be read by them, and meditated upon in Private.

The Sermons of the Prophets were deliver'd to the People, not only to the Priests, they used them in the Audience of all the People, in the Ears of *Jerusalem*, in the Gates of the Lord's House^a, and they were afterwards written for their Use, for which this one plain Text of Scripture may abundantly suffice, *Hos.* 8. 11, 12. where God speaking to *Ephraim*, that is, to the whole Body of the People of *Israel*, tells them that he had written to them the great Things of his Law, but they were accounted as a strange Thing. From whence I desire you to observe these Things.

1. That God's Law *was written*, it was not committed barely to Oral Tradition, or to be delivered by Word of Mouth.

2. That it was written *to him*, that is, to *Ephraim*, to the whole Body of the People

^a Jer. 2. According to frequent Expressions in the Prophets.

of *Israel*, Laity as well as Clergy, People as well as Priests.

3. That even the *great Things* of God's Law were written to the People, even the most excellent Precepts, those of the greatest Weight and Moment were written unto them, they were concerned in them, and therefore ought to have read, consider'd, and obey'd them.

4. That notwithstanding this, the People had been so neglectful in reading and studying the Scriptures, that they were counted as a strange Thing, as a Thing that concern'd them not, which they did not regard, yea, they slighted and contemned them.

And lastly, That this Neglect of Reading the Scriptures, was the Cause of their falling into Idolatry; of their making many Altars to Sin; their forsaking the one Altar of God at *Jerusalem*, at which alone he required them to serve, and multiplying many Altars, under Shew and Pretence of a greater Religion and Devotion, in a false Way. And the Reason of all this God declares to have been their *Neglect of his written Law*. This aggravates their Sin, renders them inexcusable, that when they had plain written Law to be directed by, and many and frequent Admonitions, to read and study it, that yet they should neglect and disregard it, they should become willingly and obstinately ignorant of it.

Words very remarkable, which I shall leave Men concerned to apply unto themselves, and to avoid the Neglecting of the Scriptures, as they would falling into Multiplying of Altars, that is, into Schism and Idolatry: Ending all in the excellent Collect of our Church for this Day.

Blessed Lord, who hath caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the Blessed Hope of Everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON





SERMON II.

JOHN V. 39.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.

THESE Words were spoken by our Saviour to the *Jews*, who, as you have heard, were commanded by God diligently to Study the Scriptures. They sucked them in as it were with their Mother's Milk, and even the Mouths of very Babes and Sucklings were taught to praise God in the Language of Scripture. For thus the Apostle tells us, that *Timothy* had been instructed in the H. Scriptures from his Childhood, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. continue in the Things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them: And that from a Child thou hast learned the Holy Scriptures (*ἀπὸ βρέφους*, *ab Infantiâ*, Vulg. Lat.) from the Infancy, from the Time thou hast been able to Speak or Learn any thing; which Custom is preserved

C

served still amongst the Modern *Jews*^a; who teach their Children some of the plainest and most necessary Texts of Scripture, as soon as they can Speak, as *Deut.* 6. 4, 5. and 33. 4. and so by degrees train them up in the Way they should walk in, adding still Precept unto Precept, and Line unto Line, until they come unto such perfection in the Law of *Moses*, that many of them can repeat the most material Passages of the Old Testament without Book; which is chiefly to be ascribed to their early Instruction of them^b. They were not barely to read the Law, but to write it too; and those who could not write, were to procure a Copy of it: So that the Law (at least the Books of *Moses*) were in the Hands of all the *Jews*, many frequently in each Family^c of the People^d. And all Sorts of People read them, even Women and Children; For *Timothy* was instructed in the Faith out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament by his Grand-mother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*. *St. Paul* was brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel* (that is, was his Scholar and Disciple) and was taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the Fathers, he was instructed in the Meaning of the Law according to the Principles of

^a Grot. & Buxtorf. Synog. cap. 7.

^b Ribera in Mich. p. 439.

^c Bishop of St. Asaph's Right of the People.

^d P. 17. ex Morini Exercit. Bibl. lib. 2. Ex. 16. Cap. 1. Num. 6. 7. Maimon. apud Ainsw.

the Pharisees, the strictest Sect amongst them. Our Saviour, when he was Twelve Years old, sat amongst the Doctors, as the Disciples and Young Men used to do ^a, both hearing the Doctors dispute, and asking them Questions; that is, out of the Law and Prophets. Which plainly shews, that it was then the Custom for the Youth to study the Law, and for them to question the Doctors of the meaning of what they did not understand, and for the Doctors to examine them; to try their Proficiency ^b. The Pharisees indeed and Rulers despised the common People ^c, and accounted them cursed, for not knowing the Law, that is, for not having the accurate Knowledge of it, according to the Expositions and Traditions of the School ^d; upon which account they were scandalized at our Saviour ^e as having never learned; that is, as one whom they had never known to have sat at the Feet of any Doctor, or been Educated in the Schools of the Prophets ^f, but to have been bred up at his poor Parents, and at a laborious Trade; and that therefore they could neither have had Skill or Ability, nor the Leisure, to have been

^a Poli Syn 911 10, 20, 30.

^b Philo, Josephus *ibid.* apud Polum.

^c Joh. 7. 49.

^d Γ. πωσιν, γ. πωσιν, 1 Cor. 1. 21. Hamm. *ibid.* Po-
dock in *perta Molis*, p. 85. Poli Syn. Hammond. Grot.

^e Matt. 13. 54. Joh. 7. 15.

^f Hammond. Grot.

trained up in the accurate Skill of the Law, according to the Observation of the Wise Man ^a, that Wisdom cometh by Opportunity of Leisure, and that the Carpenter ^b, and he that holdeth the Plough, and is occupied in Labours, cannot get Wisdom; which shews indeed that the common People, who are taken up with the Care and Labours, cannot arise to an exactness and accuracy of Knowledge; neither is it expected from them by God or Man. But yet the common People, whom the Pharisees so superciliously contemned, as not knowing the Law, heard our Saviour gladly ^c, and many of them believed on him ^d, when the Pharisees, who were more knowing Men, becoming Wise in their own Conceits, rejected the Gospel as Foolishness. And yet is plain from the foregoing Verses, that this contemned Multitude was not wholly ignorant of the Law, some of them concluding from the Miracles our Saviour had done, and from a Text of Scripture he had quoted out of *Deut.* 18. 15. *Vers.* 38. and alluded unto, that he was of a Truth the Prophet, and others of them alledging the Scripture, *Vers.* 42. And that truly, their Mistake being not in the mean-

^a Ecclef. 38. 24, 25.

^b *Vers.* 27. *Vide* Grot. in John 7. 15.

^c Mark 12. 37.

^d John 7. 31, 40.

ing of that place of Scripture they quoted, but in not knowing the true Place of our Saviour's Birth. From whence we may conclude, that even the despised Rabble and common People were not then wholly ignorant of the Scripture and that from our Saviour's quoting Scripture, to them, and their own alledging.

It is very well noted by a great Person, in a particular Discourse upon this Argument, that not only the *Jews* were permitted to Study the Scripture, but that even the Profelytes, those of other Nations, were allowed this Liberty. For we read, *Acts* 8. 28. that *Philip* found the Eunuch reading the Prophet *Esaias* in his Chariot. Which *Philip* did not rebuke him for, although he read what he did not understand, but came up into the Chariot, and interpreted the Place of Scripture unto him which he had read. From whence he observes, 1. That the Eunuch read the Scripture. 2. That he read even *Isaiab* the Prophet, one of the hardest Books of the Old Testament. 3. That he read it whilst he was on his Journey, returning and sitting in his Chariot, according to the Command of God in *Deuteron*. 6. that the Scripture should be their Companion when they were upon the Way, as well as when they sat in their Houses; that is, that they should constantly meditate upon them, that they should lose no Time unnecessarily, but em-

ploy all Opportunities, even while they were in a Journey, to discourse of them, and to meditate upon them. 4. That he read even those Places of Scripture which he understood not. Upon which *Erasmus* notes, that every one should read the Scripture, tho' they do not understand everything that they read. 1. Because they will find their labour sufficiently recompensed by what they do understand. And 2, Because if they apply themselves to the Reading of them with a pious, honest, and humble Mind, God may be graciously pleased to give them his Holy Spirit to be an Interpreter to them, as he did *Philip* to the Eunuch, and to touch their Minds with more than ordinary Degrees of his enlightning Grace. *Lastly*, it is very much to be observed, that the Eunuch thought the Assistance and Direction of a Guide necessary to his understanding the obscure Place of Scripture, *Vers. 30, 31. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the Prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some Man should guide me?*

From whence we may learn, that we are neither to neglect reading the Scripture, although we do not fully understand them, nor wholly to rest upon our own Skill, but to consult those who are more knowing than our selves. He did not ^a arrogantly pretend

^a Says Chrysostom, in Acts, P. 587. (A)

to know more than he really did, but modestly confessed his Ignorance, therefore was he taught by God after an extraordinary Way; therefore was he healed, because he dissembled not his Malady, but shewed his Wound to the Physician. But how (says he) came he to obtain so great Grace? why, by diligent and careful reading of the Scripture^a.

You see the Scriptures of the Old Testament were read diligently by People of all Sorts and Conditions, by the Laity as well as the Clergy, not only by Men, but by Women and Children; and that not only Native *Jews*, but even Profelytes and Strangers were permitted this Liberty. For this Reason the Scripture was at first writ in a Tongue understood by all the People, as is evidently plain, whatsoever some assert to the contrary, from God's commanding *Moses*, Deut 31. 19. to write his Song, to teach it the Children of *Israel*, and to put it into their Mouths. After the Captivity, they being through long disuse grown very ignorant in their own Language, you see from *Ezra* that the Priests took great Pains to teach it them; There were Schools and Synagogues built in all Places of their Country, for this very purpose, to instruct them in their Law, and in the moral and spiritual Part of God's

^a Chrysostom, 590. (B) *So great so useful a Thing is it to Search the Scripture*, 591. (A)

Service. This had so great Effect, that they never after fell into Idolatry. The reason of which Learned Men having much enquired after, they can find no fairer Account of it than this, that where the Law was read and taught, and the Service of God duly celebrated, there was the most powerful Means to keep Men constant to their Profession ^a. In After-times we find that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were read every Sabbath-Day in their Synagogues, *Acts* 15. 21. For *Moses* of Old Time hath in every City them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-Day: Here we find that by *reading* of it, *Moses* (that is, *Moses's* Law) was preached, or read, and pronounced aloud ^b in their Synagogues or Publick Assemblies for God's Spiritual and Moral Service, every Sabbath-Day; and that *of old time*; that is, from ancient Times, by an Immemorial Custom, probably instituted by *Moses* himself. And that the *Prophets* also were read in their Synagogues is plain from *Acts* 13. 15. where St. *Paul* stood up to Preach after the reading of the Law and the *Prophets*. And to stop all Cavil which may be made, as that although they were read, yet it might be in a Language which they understood not; I shall shut this Argument

^a Thornd. *Assembl.* p. 47, 48. ^b Grot.

with the plain Testimonies of two Learned of the *Jewish* Nation, *Philo* the *Jew*, and *Josephus* the famed *Jewish* Historian, whose Works being in English, and in the Hands of many Men, the Truth of what I say may be the more easily seen. The First of these flourished about 40 Years after our Saviour, and the latter was himself a Priest and an eminent Person at the Siege of *Jerusalem*, and so could not be ignorant of their Customs. *Josephus* tells us in his Second Book against *Appion* ^a, Our Law-giver *Moses*, says he, has joined Learning and Practice together; ^b and has condescended to command us even the least Things belonging to the Government of our Life and Conversation, even to those of Eating and Drinking, Rest and Labour, which he has bounded by certain Rules and Laws. And that no Man might transgress through Ignorance, he has propounded unto us the best and most necessary Study of the Law, commanding us to hear it not once only, or twice, or at furthest many Times, but every Seventh Day, when we were to lay aside all other Business, and to meet together, to hear the Law, and to learn it exactly. This all other Lawgivers have neglected, Men generally learning their Laws rather by their Punishments than Instructions;

^a Pag. 1072. ^b (B)

and not only the Vulgar and Ignorant of their Laws, but even the greatest Men, and of most Authority amongst them ; But it is not so amongst us ; but we are so well instructed in our Laws, that if a Question be put to any one amongst us concerning them, we are able to answer more readily to it than to our very Names ; because, says he, we being taught them ^a from our Infancy, from our very Cradles, as soon as we have any Sense or Knowledge of Things, we have them thereby engraven upon our Hearts. Hence it is that so few transgress the Law amongst us, and that we have so great an Agreement in Doctrine and Practice ; our very Women and Servants knowing the Nature, Office, and End of true Piety.

Hence it is that we admit no *Innovations* in Religion, but preserve entire the Law which was given us by God from the Beginning ^b, for what can be better, what can be more useful ? Our Priests have an equal Share in the Administration of the greatest Affairs, although the High Priest hath the Government over all the rest, whom our Law-giver chose to that great eminent Station, not for their Riches, or any other such like Accomplishments ; but for his Wisdom, Eloquence, and Temperance. To their Care

^a Ἀπὸ πρώτου ἐκείνης αἰδέσεως 1702. (E)

^b 1073. A B C.

the Worship of God is committed ^a ; it is their Office to be exact Keepers of the Law, and all our other Institutions and Observances ^b. For they are the Overseers of all Things, Judges in doubtful Matters, and have Power to punish Transgressors. What Frame and Constitution of Government can be more Holy than this, what Worship more becoming the Deity? In which the whole People are prepared for the Exercise of Piety, whilst the chief Care of all Things is committed to the Priests.

Philo, who is generally thought to have conversed with some of the Apostles, when he came the Second time to *Rome* under the Emperor *Claudius*, and is thought by some (*Photius*) to have been a Christian, thus excellently discourses, *P.* 1174 (A)

We have ten Feasts, the First of them, which you will wonder at, is that which we observe every Day, by the continual Exercise of a virtuous and good Life, and thus every Day becomes a Sabbath. Next to this, is the Feast of the Seventh Day, the Sabbath, on which especially (as well as on all other Days when they could conveniently) ^c they met together according to an ancient Custom, to be instructed in the Philosophy,

^a 1073. (C)

^b ἡ πρὸς ὅλην τὴν πόλιν.

^c *P.* 685. D.

Knowledge, and Religion of their Country^b, to be taught, how to order their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, ^c in all Holiness and Virtue; on that Day they were wont to meditate upon the Works of God's Creation and Providence^d, and to reflect upon their past Actions, and to examine themselves by the Rules of their Law, whether they had obeyed them or no, and in making Resolutions of Amendment for the Future^e. To this End there are very many^f Schools^g and Oratories, or Houses of Prayer^h erected in each City, for the teaching of Religionⁱ and Vertue^k, and all Branches of their Duty towards God and Men^l, out of the Sacred Laws and Precepts of *Moses*^m: The chief,ⁿ most Learned amongst them standing up to Teach and Instruct the other sitting by^o, Standing^p to hear with all Decency and Modesty^q. And therefore he severely reprehends some for being given up wholly to Intellectual and Mystical Cabbalistical, Traditional Senses, and leaving the express Letter of the written Law^r.

^b 685. D E.^c 684. C D E. 685. A.^d 685. D.^e 758. C D. 1178 C D E.^f *Mueia.*^g 1178 D.^h 682 D.ⁱ 1178 E.^k *Ibid.* D.^l E & 685 D.^m 1178. *in fin.*ⁿ 685 D *ἡγεμῶν* most Eminent of τῶν ἀρχόντων, C. Rulers and Chief Priests.^o 1178 D.^p 685. C.^q 1178. 685. Et Thornd. of *Assembl.* 12, 13.^r Pag. 402. A B.

From what I have now said, and have formerly deliver'd unto you, I desire you to observe these following Things.

(1.) That God himself *wrote* the Ten Commandments upon Tables of Stone, and commanded *Moses* to *write* the Law, and to deliver it to the People. He did not trust it to their Memory, to be deliver'd by Oral Tradition, by Word of Mouth, from Father to Son, but committed it to Writing, as the safest and surest Way of Conveyance.

(2.) That he commanded *All* the People, *all Israel*, Deut. 6. to study diligently the Law, and to teach it to their Children, which you see was observed by them, even at the Time of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*.

(3.) That they were to learn the Law not only at the Priests Mouth, but were to study it themselves in Private. For, how else could they meditate upon it Day and Night, and make it their constant Study at Home and Abroad? We read also that the Eunuch *read* the Scripture; and the Prophet *Isaiab*^a calls upon the People of *Israel* to seek out of the Book of the Lord and read. It was also part of the Office of the Scribes, to write out Copies of the Law for

^a 24. 16.

the People. Each Family had several, say the latter *Jews*. And howsoever they come to be so fatally neglectful under the Idolatrous King *Manasses*, as that the Authentick Copy of *Moses* was wondred at, and took to be a strange thing; yet it is plainly evident that at other times (and very probably then too) there were many Copies of the Law in the Hands of the People, from the known Story of *Antiochus*, 1 *Macc.* 1. 57. who put to Death all those who had the Books of the Law in their Custody *.

(4.) I observe that they were read by all Sorts of People, Men, Women, and Children; for *Timothy* was instructed in the Law from his Childhood, by his Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*.

(5.) That in distinct places (as *Josephus* notes) the Priests were to be their Instructors: They were, according to the Command of God, to seek the Law at their Mouths; and they were to hear those who sat in *Moses's* Seat, *Hear ye them*, says our Saviour, in doubtful Cases, and in what they teach out of, and according to the Law of *Moses*.

(6.) That when the *Jews* neglected the Study of the Law, they usually fell into Ido-

* See Pocock in Hof. 8. 11, 12.

latry, as appears from the 2d Book of *Kings*, the 21th and 22th Chapters; and from that remarkable place, *Hos.* 8. 11, 12. where God gives the Reason of *Ephraim's* multiplying many Altars to Sin to be, because they accounted the *written* Law of God a strange thing; they neglected and despised it.

(7.) I observe, that the Scriptures were deliver'd and read in a Tongue understood by the Generality of the People; and when they did not, there was great Care taken to instruct them in it, as appears from *Neb.* 8. 8. So they (the Priests) read in the Book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the Sense, and caused them to understand the Reading. And when by reason of the *Macedonian* Conquests the *Jews* were forced to learn the *Greek* Language, and most of them who were dispersed into other Countries, might be wholly ignorant of the *Hebrew* Language, it pleased Providence to provide for them a Translation into *Greek*, which was read in their Synagogues, and withal being the most general Language of the World, made Way for the Dispersing of the Gospel over the whole Earth.

(8.) That when the Scriptures were read, the People stood up, *Neb.* 8. 5. as we do now at the Gospel. And when *Ezra* blessed the Lord, the whole People lifting up their Hands, bowed their Heads and worshipped the Lord with their Faces to the Ground; which being Acts of Bodily Reverence, Natural,

ral, not Typical and barely Ceremonial Signs of Humility and Devotion, were observed by the Christians in their Solemnities, and ought accordingly to be observed by us. For most of the religious Observances of the Christians (as I noted) were taken from the *Jews*, and adopted into Christian Religion, by our Saviour, his Apostles, and the Primitive Christians, who took the *Jewish* Synagogue (as it really is) to be a Typical Model of the Christian. Hence Baptism was retained a Rite of Initiation amongst the *Jews*; and the Lord's Supper, which succeeded the Paschal Supper. Hence Bishops, Priests, and Deacons succeed into the place of the High-Priest, the Priests and the Levites under the Law. And if the Priests were to be obeyed and consulted in doubtful Cases under the Law, much more under the Gospel. Which is St. *Cyprian's* reasoning, and the Primitive Fathers.

Lastly, We may observe that they spent the Sabbath-Day in studying the Law; and in instructing their Families; in examining their own Consciences; in meditating upon the Works of Creation and of Providence, and in Praising God for his Works; which may justly upbraid us Christians.

May God imprint what I have said upon all our Hearts, and keep us Steady in the Profession of it; May we so study and search the Scriptures, as that we may obtain the End of it, even Eternal Life.

SERMON



SERMON III.

JOHN V. 39.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think
ye have Eternal Life, and they are they
which testify of me.*

THE Reading of the Scriptures was thought so necessary in the Primitive Church, that the Evangelists, who travelled into far Countries, to propagate the Gospel, not only preached it unto them, but deliver'd it in Writing unto the Churches of their planting^a; which received the Scriptures from the Hands of those by whom they were instructed and catechized in the Faith, that they might not be imposed upon by false Copies of the Scripture, which were used to be forged by the Hereticks of those Times. ^b *Ignatius*, the Successor of *St. Peter* in the Bishoprick of *Antioch*, exhorted the Cities of *Asia*, as he pass'd through them to *Rome*, to be devoured of Wild Beasts; to beware of those Heresies

^a Euseb. 3. 37.

^b Ibid. tot. Caput.

which were then in the Church; and to that End he admonished them to stick closely to the Tradition they had received of the Apostles (that is, the Apostolical Doctrine ^a delivered down) and thought it necessary it should be deliver'd in Writing, for the greater Security; (*ὑπερ ἀσφαλείας.*) He did not think that Tradition, or Delivery by bare Word of Mouth, was the safest Way of Conveyance to Posterity, but was for committing the Apostolical Tradition, that is, Doctrine, to writing, for the greater Safety and Security. ^b And the Church of *Rome* it self ^c was not contented with the bare Preaching of St. *Peter*, or thought it self-sufficient to be taught only by an *unwritten Word*, but entreated St. *Mark*, who was St. *Peter's* Companion, to leave them in Writing the Doctrine they had heard from him; whereupon he wrote the Gospel, we have now extant under his Name, and left it with them at his departure to *Egypt*; ^d which being read by St. *Peter*, was approved of by him. ^e St. *Matthew*, at his departure from the *Jews*, his Countrymen, wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, to supply by his Writing what was wanting to perfect and compleat his Preach-

^a Pearson *Vindic. Ignat. Part. 2. p. 8.*

^b Euseb. 3. 36. p. 107. Et Pearson *Vindic. Ignat. Part. 2. p. 8.*

^c As Clem. Alexandr. reports, apud Euseb. 2. 15.

^d Euseb. 2. 15, 16.

^e Ibid.

ing. ^a St. *Luke* tells us expressly at the Beginning of his Gospel, (from *Verse* 1, to 4.) the Reason why he wrote it: *That thou mightest know the certainty of those Things, wherein thou hast been instructed*; That thou mightest know by my Writing, the certainty of those Things, in which thou hast been before instructed or catechized, for so the Word signifies, that is, that thou may'st have a more certain, more sure, and full Knowledge of my writing of the Principles of Christianity, than thou hadst by the more General and Oral Instruction of Catechizing ^b. Whence we gather, that the Writings of St. *Luke* contained a more full and distinct Instruction, it was more in order (*Vers.* 3.) more methodical, distinct, and explicit ^c, than the Catechetical Instructions before delivered unto them. 2. That what *Jesus* did and taught until the Day of his Ascension, (which St. *Luke*, Act. 1. 2. himself tells us) was the Sum of his own Gospel, might be known with greater Certainty from his written Gospel, than from the Catechisms which they had before learnt by word of Mouth ^d. The Doctrine of Christ was at first preached, or delivered by word of Mouth, by the Apostles, who were from the beginning Eye-

^a Euseb. 3. 24. Et Valles.

^b For so Erasmus, Poli Syn. Et Grot. Vide Chrysost. in Matth. sub init.

^c Grot.

^d Grot. & Poli Synops. Euseb.

witnesses and Ministers of the Word; they first preached what they had been taught by Christ before they wrote, and then wrote what they had been taught. ^a And Tradition is not taken in those Primitive Authors, for Doctrines not contained in Scripture, deliver'd down by word of Mouth; (which I mention, because some late Pamphlets would perswade the People so) but it signifieth the Doctrine of Christ any way deliver'd unto the Church, by Writing as well as by Preaching, ^b at first by word of Mouth, and afterwards for greater Certainty by Writing ^c. And therefore they do not mean any different Doctrine, but the same diversly deliver'd, and assert, that what was deliver'd by Preaching, was the same with what was writ, as to necessary Matters of Doctrine. Thus *Irenaeus*, who was a diligent Disciple of *Poly-carp*, who had conversed with St. *John*, tells us, that the Scriptures exactly agree with what he heard from them ^d by word of Mouth. And another who travelled on purpose through many Parts of the World, to discourse with the Bishops of the Church, professes, that he learnt the same Doctrine from all of them, which was no other in

^a Iren.

^b Grot. in Luc. 1. 2.

^c Pearson in Ignat. Part 2. p. 8.

^d Pearf. Part 1. p. 102.

every Succession and City, than what had been preached by the Law, the Prophets, and our Lord. ^a And one of the Ancients, who introduced several Errors into the Church, was one who neglected Written Tradition, and relied mostly upon Oral, thinking he could profit more by conversing with ancient Persons, and learning from them what they had heard, than by reading of Books. ^b Whereby we see the great Credit, we ought to give to the Scriptures, the Truth of them having been so exactly scanned and canvassed so soon in the beginning of Christianity, when they had Opportunities to converse with those, who were Eye-witnesses of what is deliver'd in the Gospel, and who had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, or had it deliver'd unto them from those that were Eye-witnesses. We ought (say the Ancients ^c) not to deliver the least thing concerning the Divine and Holy *Mysteries of Faith*, without the Holy Scriptures. Do not believe me (us) upon our bare Word, if we do not prove (demonstrate) what we say out of Scripture. For the very Safety and Preservation of our Faith depends not upon cunning Wit and Oratory, but upon Demonstrations out of the Holy Scriptures. This is meant concerning Matters of Faith,

^a Euseb. 4. 22. Hegesippus.

^b Euseb. 3. 39. p. 111. (B)

^c Cyr. Lat. 4. p. 30. (B)

of pure Revelation, not concerning those Things which may be known from the Light of Nature, or Matters of meer Government, Discipline and Practice; Not as if a Text of Scripture were necessary for every thing else, which might be sufficiently known by other Ways and Means, but of Holy Mysteries and Matters of Faith. The Primitive Christians diligently trained up their Children in the study of the Divine Books. *Leonidas*, the Father of *Origen*, (who is thought to have been a Martyr for Christian Religion) took care to have him so instructed from his Youth in the Holy Scriptures, and that *before* he was taught any other Learning; requiring of him, to repeat some Portion of it without Book every Day. And from hence it was, that he came to so great Skill and Knowledge in the Scriptures. ^a And the Heresies he is accused of chiefly came from his too great Curiosity, and his Study of Philosophy rather than the Scriptures.

It is Notorious, that as soon as any thing was settled in Christianity, there were publick Catechetical Schools erected, in which the Youth were trained up in Knowledge of the Scriptures, which were generally adjoining to the Bishop's Palace, and under his Care; and they were taught (as the Eccle-

^a Euseb. 6. 2.

siastical Historian *Eusebius* relates, in his Description of the famous Church, built by *Paulinus* the Bishop, in which was a Catechetical School) first the Creed, then they were instructed in the plain literal Sense of the Gospels, having an easy short Exposition of it deliver'd unto them, and so by degrees were trained up, in the fuller, (Mystical) and more sublime, and compleat Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures ^a. Learn from hence all of you that are Parents and Masters of Families, to take Care to breed up your Children in the Fear of the Lord; see that they first learn the Creed and their Catechism; then be sure to train them up that they read some of the plain places of Scripture, as the *Proverbs* and *Psalms*; our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, and the latter Chapters of *St. Paul's* Epistles, which usually end with admirable and plain Precepts of Morality. And do not content your selves with their bare Reading of them, but exact daily from them some Sentence or other; let them learn without Book some Text of Scripture, and see that they daily give you an Account of it.

Season their Minds betimes with Holy Instructions, before bad Thoughts take possession of them. Let them not be trained in the Modes of Pride and Vanity, *before* they

^a Euseb. lib. 10. p. 385.

can say their Prayers; and learn to Curse and Blaspheme God's Name, before they can tell who gave them their own.

One of the Ancients ^a giving us the Character of a perfect Christian, tells us, that his whole Life is a Holy Feast. His Morning Sacrifice (first of all) consists of Prayers and Praises, he *reads the Scriptures* before Meals, has Psalms and Hymns sung at Meals, and before Bed-time, and ends with Prayers at Night, or Nightly Devotions (as the Psalmist had.) The reading of Scripture, and Psalms and Hymns, were part of the Entertainment of their Feasts; so Devout and full of Zeal was the first fervour of Christianity, accounting that their very Meals might be sanctified by the Word of God, as well as by Prayer. And because this is a Holy Day, a Day of quiet and release from business (says Holy St. *Cyprian*) let us pass the remainder of it with Mirth and Chearfulness. Let our Meals, according to Custom, be accompanied with Devotion, with Psalms and Hymns; for a Spiritual ^b repast is the best Entertainment. Which Custom is still in part preserved amongst Christians, who generally begin their Meals with Prayer to God, and conclude them with a Thanksgiving; and the Scriptures are still read in most Colleges of

^a Clem. Alexandr. p. 523.

^b Mulcedo. Regale.

the Universities at Meals, as they were by some Christians before Meals; for such Customs are not universally binding; and were not, when in Practice, uniform in every Country. Each Nation has its divers Customs, and provided Temperance and Sobriety, innocent Mirth, and ~~even~~ Occasion administers, Good Instruction and Godly Edification be promoted, our Meals are sanctified by Prayer before, and Thanksgiving after, which ought never to be omitted; for we see that our Saviour, who is the best Example, never broke Bread without Thanks to God.

The Psalms which they used to sing after Meals, were not only of their own Composing, (which all had not Ability to do) but were taken out of Scripture ^a, especially out of the Psalms of *David*; which became so familiar to the common People, by rehearsing them daily in the Publick Service, (much after the manner we do now) that both in their Houses and in the Streets, and in the High-Ways, many of them were frequently wont to recreate themselves with the Singing of these Holy Songs. ^b Many of them did not indeed *so much mind* the other Books of the Scripture ^c of the Old Testament; but the Psalms all of them could say

^a Tertull. *Apology*.

^b Theodoret. Prefat. in Psalm. Tom. 1. pag. 393.

^c Theodoret. *ibid*. Chrysof. 615. E Tom. 3. Et in Johan. p. 164, 166.

without Book ^a; Howsoever they are never prohibited the Reading of the other Books, but are exhorted and encouraged to it. Get you Bibles, (says St. *Chrysostom*) even you of the Laity, if you care not to get all, get at least the New Testament. Let the Psalms then, my beloved Brethren, be the constant Meditation of all of you; for they are generally easie, and where they are not, there are Helps provided for the Understanding of them, particularly an excellent plain Paraphrase upon them by Dr. *Patrick* ^b; allot them a daily Part of your Devotion, and spiritual Meditation, for they are excellently fitted for all manner of Spiritual Exigencies. ^c There were some amongst the ancient Christians, who could say not only the Psalms, but the whole Scriptures without Book. ^d Great part of St. *Hierom's* Pains was spent in writing Comments upon Scripture, for the use of noble and devout Ladies, whose Songs were nothing but Psalms, and whose Discourse was the Gospel ^e. He dedicated his Commentary even upon the Prophet *Isaiab* to one of them, and advised one *Gaudentius*, to cause his Daughter at

^a Chrysost. *ibid.* & Hom. Prefat. in Psalm. & in Joh. Lib. 5. 166. Hieron. ad Marc. Ep. 18. ad Lat. Ep. 4. 7.

^b And Hatton's *Psalter*.

^c Hamm. *Preface*.

^d Euseb. *Hist.* p. 344. (B) Suicerus in ἀποσινζω.

^e Patr. Prefat. in Prov.

seven Years old, to get the Psalms by Heart, and so to go on afterwards by degrees in Learning the rest of the Holy Scriptures. ^a St. *Cyril* advises all who were newly baptized to study the Holy Scriptures. ^b Some of the Philosophers, who became Christians in the first Ages of the Church, ascribe their Conversion to the reading of the Scriptures ^c. One of them, who was a great Scholar, and initiated into the Mysteries of their Gods, tells us, that searching after all Means to come to the Knowledge of Truth, he at last lit upon the Scriptures; which for their Age were older than all the Philosophy of the *Greeks*, and more Divine than all their Erroneous Doctrines. And finding them to have a plain and unaffected Style, and to give an easie Account of the Creation of the World ^d, finding them to have plainly foretold future Things, and that they contained great and excellent Promises, and asserted one God, supreme Governour of all Things, therefore (says he) was I perswaded by them, through the Grace and Illumination of God, to become a Christian. All Knowledge, says he, may be learnt by those who do not proudly and contumeliously condemn and reject Scripture, which are able to make all those who study

^a *Bishop of St Asaph's People's Rights to Scrip.* p. 20.

^b *Cyrill Hier.* p. 36.

^c *Tat. Assyr.* p. 165.

^d *Aliter Interprets, at falsè.*

them,

them, acceptable to God. You see what great things he attributes to the study of the Scriptures, and the Motives he had to believe them, even the same which Protestants usually alledge: The simplicity of its Style; the intelligible Account it gives of the Creation; the greatness of its Promises; the reasonableness and efficacy of its Doctrine; and the Truth of its Predictions. Another of them tells us that he became a Christian by reading the Prophets, and by comparing their Predictions with the Accomplishments made of them by Christ. This he found to be the only certain and useful Knowledge, to be of Evidence and Demonstration, full of the Divine Spirit, overflowing with Power, and flourishing with Grace ^a.

The Divine Books are far beyond and transcend all Demonstration, whosoever reads them will find much benefit by them ^b.

Search then and study the Scriptures, for in them you will find what will render you beloved and acceptable in the sight of God, even the most exact and sublime Precepts of Holiness and Vertue.

There you are taught to love them that hate you, and to pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. You are taught to obey Magistrates, even the froward as well as the gentle, and that not only for

^a 226 Just. λ. (D)

^b 224 (D)

Wrath, but for Conscience sake; We are to look upon them not only as greater and more powerful than our selves, and as armed with Strength to compel us to Obedience, but as the Officers of God, constituted by him, by his natural Laws, by his providential Dispensation, and by positive Appointment in his Word. They are Ministers of God to us for good, *Rom. 13.* We are never to divulge and aggravate their Faults, thereby to bring an Odium upon their Persons or Government; but, amidst the Miscarriages of their Persons, ought always to remember the Dignity of their Office. Nay, when we suffer wrongfully by them, the Scripture advises us, to take it patiently; not even then to despise Dominion, and speak evil of Dignities, but to submit with Meekness and Humility. For this is thank-worthy, if a Man, for Conscience towards God, endure Grief, suffering wrongfully. For what Glory is it, if when you are buffeted for your Faults, you take it patiently? but if when you do well and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto where you *called*. This is the very calling of a Christian, that for which he was designed and appointed, to follow a crucified Saviour, and to imitate him in his Sufferings, as well as to partake in his Glory.

Nay further, the Scriptures command us to bear Afflictions not only with Patience,
but

but with Thanksgiving, and with exceeding great Joy ; as being Marks and Tokens of God's Fatherly Love, and of our being *Sons*, and not *Bastards*. Upon this Account some have thought it lawful, not only to thank God for Afflictions when laid upon us, but also to wish and pray for them, as they are Exercises of Vertue, and Signs of God's Love. But such Prayers and Wishes are by no means to be presumed upon, lest we should tempt God to leave us to our selves (as he did St. *Peter*) for our too much trusting to our own strength. They are chearfully to be suffered when inflicted upon us, but yet not to be wished for, but earnestly prayed against, (as our Saviour deprecated his Sufferings) out of a Conscioufness of our own Infirmities. And the extraordinary Actions of some Saints are not to be the Rule of our ordinary Practice, and never to be attempted, but when we have a grounded Assurance, that we are acted by the same extraordinary Spirit that they were.

And yet, notwithstanding all this, the Apostle exhorts us, 1 *Tim.* 2. to make Prayers and Thanksgivings even for Heathen Kings and Princes, for the Emperor which then reigned, was certainly a Heathen, if not a Persecutor. And the Primitive Christians prayed in the common Prayers of the Church, that God would give them a long Life, a secure and quiet Reign, faithful Ser-
vants,

vants, Victorious Armies, Legal Parliaments, a good People, a quiet World, and whatsoever they could possibly wish as Men and Emperors. And they prayed, that according to Right and Equity, the Son might succeed to the Father, that the Dominions might be enlarged, and that all things might prosper which they took in hand. And this, when they were sure that their Sons would be Educated in the *Heathen Religion*, and very probably be *Persecutors*. And this I presume they did, because that a *continual Succession* being a publick Blessing to a Nation, as securing it from doubtful Titles, Wars, and Confusion, and the transferring of the Crown to foreign Nations, it may and ought to be prayed for, and Thanks given to God for it, who has obliged us to give Thanks for all things. And the feared Evil being only accidental and *future*, it ought not to disoblige us from a *present* positive Duty; for we are to do our Duty, and leave the Issue and Event of things to God. “ And the peace-
“ able continuance of Governments in general, doing more Good than Persecution
“ doth Harm, they thought themselves
“ obliged to pray and give God thanks for
“ it. The Words of that great Man *Grotius* are so full to this purpose, that I cannot but transcribe them.

A change of Religion may be feared. Our only Support in this Case is the Divine Providence.

vidence. For God has the Mind, Issue and Event of all things in his Power, but especially the Hearts of Kings. God works Good by bad as well as good Princes; sometimes Peace and Tranquillity, at other times Persecution, is fittest for God's Church.

Let us then lay to Heart all these Things, so, that the Spirit of God may lead us from Grace to Grace Here, and so prepare us for Eternal Happiness Hereafter.



SERMON



SERMON IV.

2 PET. III. 16.

As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of those things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.

[JAMES I. 21.

And receive with Meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your Souls.]

TO settle Men upon sure and honest Foundations of Truth, in times of Doubt and Division, as it is an Act of Charity, so it is one main part of the Office of a Minister. This I have endeavour'd to do, by raising in you a just Value of the Holy Scripture, the certain Rule and firm Foundation of our Faith; and by exciting you to search and study the Scriptures, by such Motives and Arguments, which

E God

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God himself, our blessed Saviour, and his inspired Penmen, have laid down in Holy Writ, as well as by the Practice of the Primitive Ages of the Church.

I come now to consider the Arguments which are made use of, to draw Men off from relying upon this surest Ground and firmest Foundation of their Faith, which, being agreed on all Hands to have been endited by Men immediately assisted by God, ought to have been unanimously embraced by all with a Reverence suitable to the Character they bear.

But for Reasons too obvious to be mentioned, some Men have made it their Business studiously to raise Objections against it; and amongst others none is more insisted on than the Obscurity of the Scripture, from the Words I have read unto you.

From which I shall draw some Observations, and then proceed.

(1.) Concerning the Obscurity of the Scripture, it is so far from proving that the Scriptures ought not to be read by the unlearned and unstable People, that it plainly supposes, that they were then read by them, for how else could they have wrested them to their own Destruction?

(2.) This Objection is not altogether true for neither is it said by the Apostle here, nor
by

by any other of the Sacred Writers, that all the Scripture is obscure; but only that there be *some things* hard to be understood. Only *some things*, not all, some things in St. Paul's Epistles, in *his* Epistle, that is, in his Brother Paul's Epistles, of whom he had spoke in the foregoing Verse, not in every other Book of the Holy Scriptures; And these some things restrained by the Apostle to what he had been speaking of before---As also in all his Epistles, speaking in them *of these* things. And what things are they, but those he had before mentioned in this Epistle, particularly the Cause of God's delaying so long to come to Judgment, ^a which is called the Long-suffering of our Lord, *Vers. 15.*

(3.) That he doth not say that they are impossible to be understood, but only that they are *συνίσιμα*, *hard* to be understood; not that they cannot be understood *at all*, but only not without Pains and Industry, not without Study and Application of Mind. Search the Scriptures-- Diligently and with Attention ^b.

(4.) That although other places of Scripture also may be wrested by Men unto their own Destruction, as well as those hard ones

^a Poli Syn. & Hamm.

^b *Obscura, ut cum labore inveniuntur, non autem clausa ut nullo modo inveniuntur. Opus Imperf. in Matth. & Thorndic. Epilog. Part. 3. p. 185.*

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St. *Peter* refers to; yet the Apostle doth not say, that all Men are in that Danger, but only the *Unlearned* and *Unstable*. The *Unlearned*, that is, not these who were ignorant in Philosophy, and the learned Arts; for St. *Peter* was ignorant of those himself, as plainly appears from *Acts* 4. 13. where the Learned Men of the *Jews* plainly perceived St. *John*, and St. *Peter* himself were unlearned and ignorant Men, that is, in what was then accounted Learning amongst the *Jews*. But by *Unlearned* here are meant, Men unlearned in the Truths of Religion, in the Principles of Christianity, which alone was accounted Learning, and Knowledge by the Apostles. Men that would not be taught the Spiritual sort of Learning, or at least not mind and consider the Scope and true intent of them ^a.

The *Unstable*, that is, those who are unconstant, and unsettled, whose Religion has not taken deep root in an honest, sincere and upright heart; such as are carried about with every Wind of Doctrine, and come to no settled and firm Resolution in Faith and Practice. Such as these wrest the Scriptures; these wrack and distort it, and pervert the Sense of them, to serve their Lusts, Passions, and Prejudices. Such as these are in danger of Destruction, not those who having learnt

^a Grot. Pol. Syn. & Patr. p. 142.

the Principles of Christianity, and being deeply rooted and settled in them, do conscientiously practise what they already know, that so they may know more. Not they, who (as our Saviour speaks, *Matth.* 13. 23.) that hear the Word and understand it, and also bear and bring forth Fruit abundantly.

(5.) It must be confessed that there are many Things in the Scripture hard to be understood. Of which Wise Dispensation of Divine Providence, the Fathers of the Church have given us very good and satisfactory Reasons. As (First) to avoid Contempt, and to raise Men's Desire after them, and Admiration for them; that the meanness of them might not make them be neglected and contemned. ^a There is enough in Scripture to entertain even the Skill of the most Critical and Curious; and when *Celsus* the Heathen had upbraided the meanness and simplicity of the Scripture, *Origen* bid him first explain St. *Paul's* Epistle to the *Romans*, and then he might pretend, that they were mean, low, and contemptible.

Secondly, Some places are obscure, to keep our Mind employed, and thereby turn them off from the study of bad Things ^b: for the Soul is naturally active, and will employ it self in the study of bad Things rather than in none at all.

^a Theod. in Cap. 9. Dan. Thornd. *Part.* 1. p. 31.

^b St. Basil. Tom. 1. p. 807.

Thirdly, To encrease our Desire after them, and reward the Pains we have taken in Searching for them, and thereby to fix and implant them more firmly in our Minds. For it is natural for Mankind to neglect the Search of what is mean, plain, and obvious, and to thirst after the Knowledge of Great and Myſterious Things; and Men take greater Satisfaction and Pleasure in the Enjoyment of what they obtained not without Difficulty, Sweat, and Labour, than in what they come by easily. The very Reflection upon the Difficulties they had passed through, encreases their Delight and Satisfaction in the Enjoyment, and fixes a more lasting and permanent Love in their Minds for it ^a. Whereas things easily obtained, do as easily slip out of Mens Mind. *Gratior est fructus quem spes productior edit*; --- says the Christian Poet ^b.

Lastly, It pleased God to let some things be hard to be understood, to exercise our Diligence and Patience, and to keep us in a continual Dependance upon, and Expectation of, as well as Prayer for the Illuminating Grace of his Holy Spirit.

All Places of Scripture (says St. *Chrysostome*) are not plain, lest we should be idle; neither are all obscure, lest we should de-

^a Suicerus *s.* 796. 1101.

^b Ibid. 796. Aurei 1 e Prosperi Versus.

spond. ^a And God hath very excellently and wholsomely so temper'd the Holy Scripture, as not only to satisfy Man's Hunger by plain Places, but even squeamish, nice and delicate Palates, by what is more mysterious and obscure. ^b Obscure things are to be left to God, not only in this World, but in the World to come, that God might always Teach, and Man might always Learn ^c. This Obscurity teaches us to pray for the Grace of God (which is requisite to the true and saving Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures) ^d and is permitted by God, without any Reflection upon his Wisdom and Goodness, to exercise our Industry, Humility, and Devotion; to keep us in a due Dependance upon our Guides and Pastors; and to encrease our patient longing for that Day when the Vail of Ignorance shall be removed, and we shall know the Mysteries of Faith plainly, even as we our selves are known.

But howsoever the Apostle himself doth not infer from the Obscurity of the Scriptures, that they ought not to be read at all, but forewarns the Unlearned and Unstable, not to wrest them; but for those his beloved Christians, who were learned and settled in the Principles of Christianity, whom he had

^a Suicerus 796.

^b St. August. de Doctr. Christ. 2. 6.

^c Iren. 2, 47. Et Thorod.

^d Voss. Hist. Pelag.

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instructed in these Things, and had been forewarned of them by him, them he not only admonishes, *Vers.* 17. to beware of Seducers, lest they should be led away with the Error of the Wicked, and fall from their Steadfastness; but also, *Vers.* 18. he bids them grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He bids them *grow* and increase in the Knowledge of the Doctrine of our Saviour; and how can that be better done, than by searching the Scriptures, which contain what Christ did and *taught*, as St. *Luke* assures us?

This very Objection from the Difficulty of the Scripture was urged in the Ancient Church, and People excused themselves from searching the Scriptures, because they were obscure; Now the ancient Fathers were so far from dissuading them from reading them, because of their Obscurity, that they encouraged them more to read it. ^a You will object (says St. *Chrysostom*) I do not understand the Scriptures, I cannot fathom the Depth of those Writings, why should I therefore labour in vain, and study after what I cannot understand? To this Objection he answers in several places of his Writings; As (1.) ^b Read even what you do not under-

^a St. Chrysost. *Tom.* 2. p. 592. (C)

^b *Tom.* 5. p. 58. (A)

stand,

stand, because the very reading of the Holy Scripture breeds Sanctity in the Soul. It will leave some Tincture of the Spirit which endited it upon our Souls^a; and the Benefit we reap from what we *do* understand, will sufficiently recompence the Pains we take in reading what we *do not*. (2.) They who diligently read Scripture with a devout and attentive Mind, may expect the Grace of God to enlighten their Understandings: As the Eunuch (*Acts* 8.) who read the Prophet *Isaiab*, which he understood not, was accounted worthy of having *Philip*, an extraordinary Interpreter, sent to him by God^b. And although (says he)^c we cannot now expect to have the extraordinary Assistance of a *Philip*, of an Evangelist to instruct us, yet we may (in the due Use of Means) still expect the Grace of *that Spirit which assisted him*. (3.) Read diligently what thou dost understand, and thereby thou wilt by degrees attain to the Knowledge of what thou dost not^d. For as St. *Basil* very well notes^e, what seems to be obscure in some places of Scripture, is sufficiently explained in others. But if after all thou can'st not understand what thou readest^f after most

^a *Pag. p. 46.*

^b *Chrysoft. Tom. 2. p. 391. (D) 392. (C) 393. (A) 394. (B C)*

^c *Tom. 5. p. 59. (D)*

^d *Chrysoft. Tom. 5. p. 59. (A)*

^e *Suicerus, p. 796.*

^f *Chrysoft. p. 59. (B)*

diligent Search, repair to some Body who is more knowing and wiser than thou thy self; Go to some Teacher, confer with him about the Things which thou hast read in Scripture, and God will not despise thy Diligence and Care; and if thou canst light upon no Man to teach thee, he himself will reveal it unto thee. ^a For this is the Method and Way of Divine Providence, not only in imparting the Knowledge of Scripture, but in all other Things whatsoever, freely and largely to bestow what is necessary on his Part, if we do but contribute what is necessary on ours. ^b The Way then to attain the true Knowledge of Scripture is modestly and diligently to make use of our own Endeavours, under the due Guidance of Teachers, and so in the use of Means patiently to rely upon, and expect the Divine Grace.

It is very well observed by an ancient Doctor of the Christian Church ^c, that Men ought to have led so pure Lives, as not to have stood in need of the help of Writing, but to have been instructed by the Grace of God instead of Books, and our Hearts written upon by his Spirit, instead of Ink and Paper. For thus God taught *Noah*, *Abraham* and his Progeny; thus he conversed

^a Chrysost. *ibid.*

^b Chrysost. *Tom.* 2. p. 394.

^c Sc. Chrysost. *in* Matth. p. 1.

with *Job* and *Moses*, not by Writing, but by himself, finding their Hearts to be pure, and thereby fitted for the Divine Illumination. But when the whole Nation of the *Jews* sunk into the very Depth of Wickedness, then God delivered unto them Tables of Stone, and Admonition by Writing became necessary unto them. And thus it was under the New as well as under the Old Testament. For Christ delivered nothing in Writing to his Apostles, but promised to give them, instead of that, the Grace of his Holy Spirit; which was to teach them all things, and bring all things which he had said unto their Remembrance, *Job. 14. 26*^a. This was indeed the better, and more to be preferred to the former Way of being instructed, to be taught of God, and to have his Law written, not upon Tables of Stone, but upon the fleshly Tables of our Hearts. But because in long process of time Men stumbled, (*ἐξέλειλαν*) and fell, and erred from the right Way of Doctrine and Manners, therefore was there again need of Men's being put in Mind of their Duty by Writing. But since we have by our Sins lost the great Happiness of being taught immediately by the Spirit of God, let us lay hold on the Bible, as on a *second* Plank after a Shipwreck; for if it be a great Fault to have been

^a Chrysost. in Hebr. p. 1854.

so sinful as to stand in need of *arising*; how much a greater will it be not to profit even by this *second* Help which God hath afforded us; but to neglect the Scriptures, and thereby draw upon our selves the greater Punishment ^a? Writing then being necessary to us in this natural and sinful Estate we are in, what are we to do but read the Scripture, to meditate upon it, and imprint it upon our very Souls and Consciences; that thereby we may in some measure repair the former Loss, and have God's Will again written upon our very Hearts by his Holy Spirit. For the Scriptures were not given us ^b only to look upon, but that they might sink into our Minds, and be our Treasure, engraven upon our Hearts. It is a Piece of *Jewish* Pride and Superstition to lay up in our Memories only the Letter of the Law, and to have God's Commands only deliver'd in Writing, without ever possessing our Souls with the true Sense and Meaning of them: Christians had it otherwise deliver'd at first; even written by the Spirit of God upon their Hearts ^c. This I say not to dissuade you from getting Bibles; for I exhort you to it, and earnestly beg it of you; but only to persuade you to imprint the Words and Sense of it upon your

^a Chrysost. in Matth. p. 2.

^b Chrysost. in Joh. p. 165. (E)

^c *Of the Apostles*---Chrysost. in Princip. Matth. & in Hebr. p. 1854.

very Hearts and Minds; that so, by receiving of it, they may be purged and purify'd from Sin. If that be true which St. *Chrysostom* taught this People^a, that the Devil dares not come into that House which has the Bible in it, how much less will he dare to enter into that Soul, which is possess'd with the true Sense and Knowledge of it? For the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient Charm against Evil Spirits, as driving out bad Thoughts, and drawing down the Grace of God upon our Souls; and as they teach all the Arts and Stratagems of the Devil, how to resist, repel, and overcome him. Therefore let us so read, study, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may bring forth the Fruit of holy Living to the Salvation of all our Souls. For nothing can give a greater Value to the Holy Scriptures than their sufficiency to *save* the Souls of Men. It was this Consideration which made St. *Paul* not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, of the Doctrine of a crucified Saviour, which was accounted Foolishness in the Opinion of the seeming wise Men of the World; and yet was most highly valued and prized by St. *Paul*, because it was the Power of God to *Salvation*, to every one that believed. The Doctrine it teaches, may indeed seem contemptible to Men of proud and self-conceit-

^a In Johan. 165. (E)

ed Tempers ; but the Power and Efficacy which hath so often visibly accompanied it, can by no means breed mean Thoughts of it in the Opinion of any who duly consider it. The World's being so soon converted by it, notwithstanding the Opposition made against it by the united Force of the Kingdoms of Satan and this World ; its sudden spreading over most Parts of the Earth without Force or Fraud, only by teaching Men to do well gladly, and to suffer ill patiently, must needs make good the Character which was of old given it by the Heathens, of being the *prevailing Sect*, and the conquering Religion. The Efficacy of the Word of God was so visible in the first Ages of Christianity (that by its being the more powerfully Recommended to Mens Minds, it might be the more easily and speedily spread over the World) that the Christians challenged the Heathens to bring those Persons to the Christian Schools, whom they could not reclaim by their own Philosophy ; and then they should see what a Change and Reformation in a short Time would be wrought upon them. For a very visible and extraordinary Effect did often attend the Christian Baptism and Doctrine, whereby those who were before Voluptuous, Proud, or Intemperate, became of a sudden Chast, Humble, and strictly Sober. These were indeed extraordinary Effects, proper to the first Planting of the

the Gospel, and therefore not to be ordinarily expected now Christianity has been so long preached, propagated, and settled in the World; but yet to all who will meekly receive it, it is still accompanied with a *saving* Power. It will secure you God's Favour, and everlasting Happiness, and save your Souls as effectually, although not after so sudden, so visible, and so extraordinary a Manner; provided you do your Parts, God will not be wanting in his. If you do but lay aside all Filthiness and superfluity of Naughtiness, all unchast, unclean, and filthy Communication, which defiles the Soul, and all that superfluity of Intemperance which makes Provision for the Flesh, to satisfy the Lusts thereof; if you do but lop off all those superfluous Excrescences, and graft in their stead the Doctrine of the Scriptures; if you do but receive it into your Hearts, with Humility and Meekness, it will certainly save your Souls, because it contains all things that are necessary to that End.

Search therefore the Scriptures, for in them you will find all saving Doctrines, provided you search them under the Guidance of Men of God, whose Office it is to teach you; and whose Sermons and Writings are designed to instruct you. For in them is revealed what is able to make you wise unto Salvation. There you have the Eternal Life clearly revealed, and you are taught that it consists in
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the Enjoyment of God in a State of Happiness for ever. There you are taught the Means of obtaining it, by an entire, uniform, and persevering Obedience to the Commands of God, through Faith in Christ Jesus, that is, a hearty Belief of what Christ has taught in his Holy Scriptures. There you are taught the Way of being restored to the Favour of God, if you have forfeited it by a wilful Breach of your Vow in Baptism; even by a hearty Repentance, which is no less than an utter forsaking of your Sins. And if you would know what Means you must make use of to obtain the Grace of God, that you may forsake your Sins; you are here taught that the great Instruments and Means to be used, are no less than a hearty Sorrow, Zeal, and Indignation against our Sins, joined with Fasting, Prayer, and Alms-deeds; the great Conditions without which we cannot ordinarily obtain God's Grace, when forfeited by wilful Transgressions.

Let your Delight therefore be in this Law of the Lord, and in this Law do you meditate Day and Night, for in the Study of it you will find great Comfort, and the True Way so to attain God's Grace Here, as to be made Happy with Him to all Eternity Hereafter.

SERMON



SERMON V.

PROVERBS XIV. 24.

But the Foolishness of Fools, is Folly.

PROV. XIV. 8, 9.

8. *The Wisdom of the Prudent is to understand his Way; but the Folly of Fools is Deceit.*

9. *Fools make a Mock at Sin, but amongst the Righteous there is Favour.*



IN is frequently called *Folly*, and the whole Duty of Man by the Name of *Wisdom*, in Scripture; as if nothing were worthy of that Name, but the Fear and Love of God, and the Keeping his Commandments; and as if there were no other Folly but that of Sin. *Behold*, saith God by *Job* (Chap. 28. 28.) *the Fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding*: It is the chief Point of Wisdom, the one thing necessary, without, and in Comparison with which, all other Knowledge and Wisdom is
F foolish.

foolishness with God. Almost all along the Book of God *Folly* is the Name for Sin, and throughout the whole Book of *Proverbs*, it scarce signifies any thing else. To *work Folly*, (Gen. 34. 7. and in many other places) is to commit Sin; and *Simple ones*, and *Fools*, are no other than the Wife of the World in the Judgment of Wisdom, of the All-wise God, who is Wisdom it self; and *Thou Fool* (that opprobrious Character which Men can least digest) is the Title God himself gave the *crafty* Worldling, when he summoned his Soul to appear before him, *Luk.* 12. 20. Nay, even the Philosophers themselves, by the bare Light of Reason, saw thus far, and pronounced the Wise Man only to be truly Rich, or to be possessed of the True Riches; to be *Rich towards God* in Scripture-phraze; Sinners to be *Fools*, and every such notorious Fool a *Madman*; Every great notorious Sinner with the Stoicks ^a was a *Mad Fool*, one in whom *Folly* was mixt with *Fury*.

Now seeing that this is the Character of Sinners, not only in the Judgment of *rational Men*, but of the *Wise God* too; it is worth our while to consider the thing more closely, and accordingly to endeavour to shew, in what the Folly of Sin consists. That *Folly of Fools, which is Deceit*, which miserably deceives them to their Eternal Ruin.

^a Cicero de Officiis.

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Now because Contraries illustrate each other, therefore I shall first briefly shew what *Wisdom* is, that so we may the more easily know what is the Nature of its contrary, *Folly*.

Wisdom is that Virtue or *Gracious* Habit (for all good Gifts are from God's Grace through Christ,) by which Men know, consider, and steadily pursue their chief End, and their best Interests; and choose, and make use of Means suitable to the obtaining of them. The Wisdom of the Prudent is to *understand his Way*, or the Means to obtain his True End; for every *Way* presupposes an *End*, to which it tends, and has a Relation to it.

And therefore, on the contrary, *Folly* is that Vice, or vicious Habit, contracted by our own fault, whereby a Man is rendred ignorant, and inconsiderate, and unsteady in his Judgment, and in his pursuit of his *best End*, and his *Truest* Interest, and in the choice of the Means to obtain it.

So that the Folly of Fools, that is Sin, which is, and will at last prove to be, their fatal *Deceit*, may be Foolishness upon these Accounts.

1st, As it includes in it *Ignorance*.

2^{dly}, As it proceeds from, and includes in it *Want of Consideration*; or Inconsideration.

3dly, As it proceeds from and includes in it a Want of True Judgment, or a *Wrong Judgment* of Things; or else an Unsteadiness in the Right Judgment Men have made.

4thly, As it proposes to the Sinner a *Wrong End* of his Actions, or also *Wrong Means* to the obtaining of his True End, and even of his False one.

I. Sin is Folly, as it proceeds from, and includes in it *Ignorance* (or *Nescience*) a privation, or a want of Understanding, or Knowledge. A want of the Knowledge of the weightiest and chiefest Truths, those of our Eternal Concern; what we our selves are; the End for which we were designed by God; the End for which we were at first Created and Redeemed by him; and especially want of a due Knowledge of what Sin is, and of the Nature of that God, against whom we transgress. For if these Things were truly known by them, it could not well be, that they should be so foolish as to affront God, and despise his Authority, by contemning his Laws; if they knew that he was a Being of infinite Power and Justice, able to Punish, as well as obliged by his perfect Holiness and Purity, not to let go Sin unpunished: And if they knew that Sin included in it *Atheism*, *Rebellion*, and *Idolatry*. And from this foolish Ignorance of the Majesty of God, of the infinite Greatness

ness of him, against whom we sin; and the heinous Nature of Sin, it comes to pass, that Men do not so thoroughly believe as they should, the Threatnings denounced in Scripture against Sin: For therefore said St. *Austin* ^a long ago, Eternal Torments seem harsh, and unjust to Men led only by Sense; because they want the deep and true Knowledge of the Malignity of Sin.

II. Sin is Folly as it proceeds from a want of due *Consideration*.

Sinners are ignorant; that is, they either know not at all what God, and Sin is, or at least not as they should: And then they are *Inconsiderate*; that is, do not think upon the Things which they know, nor ponder, and weigh Things before they come to action; which is a great Argument of Folly. Now all Sin is accompanied with much of Incogitancy, or Inconsideration, (*αβουλία*) which is one main Cause of every Sin. For Sin at first entred into the World chiefly through Inconsideration, and is still ordinarily produced by it. The Sinfulness of Sin consisting in the Wills choosing and adhering to some lesser inferiour Good, for want of considering and comparing it with a greater Good.

The first Sin, and all other wilful deliberate Sins, are ordinarily produced after this

^a De Civit. Dei, 21. 12.

following manner, although through the swiftness of the Motions of the Soul, it be not ordinarily discerned by us.

(1.) The forbidden Object is presented to the Senses, or impressed upon the Imagination, by way of Temptation, and is perceived and entertained by them. Thus *Eve*, (*Gen. 3. 6.*) being tempted by the Serpent, *saw* the Fruit, or looked upon it. And covetous *Achan*, (*Josh. 7. 21.*) being tempted of his own Lusts, *saw* amongst the goodly Spoils a Babylonish Garment, two hundred Shekils of Silver, and a Wedge of Gold.

(2.) The forbidden Object is desired by the sensitive Appetite as *Good*, or Agreeable to it; by that *Desiring* Faculty, or Power in us, which follows our Senses, and is common to us with Brutes. Thus *Eve* saw that the Tree was good for Food, and a Tree to be *desired*; she saw, and simply apprehended it as such; and then had a Natural *Appetite*, *longing*, or *desire for it*: And thus also *Achan* *coveted*, or *desired* the Treasure he had seen.

(3.) Lust, or Evil Affection, and Passion, thus pleased with its beloved Object, proceeds to prevail upon the *Understanding*, or Judgment. The Understanding, one of the superior Faculties of our Souls, peculiar to us as Men, apprehends the thing proposed to it by the senses, and fancy, as *simply Good*, that is agreeable not only to the sensitive Appetite,

tite, but to the *Rational* Nature. Thus *Eve* saw that the Tree was to be desired to make one *Wise*; which was an Act of the Understanding, simply considering it as such; as it indeed was, in some Sense, and in some Consideration, for it had an Aptitude to make her wise, as to a practical experimental Knowledge of Evil, Sin, and Death.

But (4.) the *Will*, or supreme Faculty in us, by which we choose or refuse what is offered unto us by the Understanding; this Faculty, the ruling Power of our Souls takes a Complacency, or Delight in the forbidden Thing, and desires it at first with a simple Desire (*Volition* or *Woulding*) and Delight, but proceeds to an excess in both (where Sin, properly so called, begins) and from thence to a *Consent* to it, and to an exciting of our practical Powers, and the Members of the Body to the Commitment of the Sin.

Now the Folly and Deceit, and the Sinfulness of this Progress of Sin, consists in this: For,

1. The *Understanding* ought to have *consider'd* the Thing more fully, and have *taken off* the Thoughts from the forbidden Object betimes, and not have suffered them to dwell too long upon it. Thus the sanctified Understanding of *Eve*, our first Parent, was wanting in its Office, for she look'd so long upon the pleasant Fruit, that she at last took of the Fruit, and did eat; and *Achan* co-

veted the Treasure so long, that he at last took it, and hid it in the Earth.

2. The Understanding should have proceeded from a *Simple* Apprehension to a *Comparative*, and thereby have hindred the Will from cleaving and consenting to the Thing prohibited by God. That is, it should have *compared* the Thing apprehended to be good, with the chief Good, *God*, who is Goodness it self, and Best to us. And the Sinner should have thought thus within himself; The thing perceived by my Senses, and desired by my Appetite (as suppose the Apple seen by *Eve*, and the Wedge of *Gold* by *Achan*) is a Temporal perishing Object, yielding only a transitory, unsatisfactory Pleasure, to that part of Man which is common to him with the Brutes that perish; it is an inferior imperfect Good, and therefore by no means to be preferred before the Supreme perfect One.

The Will of God who made me, preserves and governs me, and can eternally punish or reward me, is certainly to be preferred before my own Will; and the Favour of God, who is an inexhaustible Eternal Treasure of all Goodness and Perfection, before a transitory Pleasure. Why therefore do I hearken to this Temptation? Why do I listen to the Suggestions of the subtile Serpent, especially when they are against the God that made me? Why do I commune with him, with so deceit-

deceitful, so treacherous an Enemy? Why do I not fly far from him? Why do I look upon the Fruit, why do I apprehend it to be good, and pleasant? Can any thing truly be so which God forbids? Why do I not draw off my Mind from the Object, and summon up all my Reason, and make use of all my Consideration to hinder my Will from proceeding to any further complacency in it? Least my own Lust, which is thus enticed, should conceive, and bring forth Sin; and Sin when it is finished, should bring forth Death.

It was for want of such Considerations; that *Eve* was at first *beguiled* by the Serpent, and that *Achan* proceeding from looking amongst the goodly Spoils, to the coveting, or desiring of them; and from thence to the taking of them, and hiding them in the Earth: Which Sin is expressly called *Folly* (*Josh. 7. 15.*)^a as all Sin is upon this Account, because it proceeds from Ignorance, Error, and Inconsiderateness.

3, The *Will* was guilty by so *adhering* to the Object, as to omit to command the Understanding to do all this.^b For the Will ought to have obliged the Understanding to reconsider the Matter, and that fully: And

^a See Clerk on Genes. 34. 7.

^b Query how far the sensitive Appetite can move the Locomotive Faculty without the Consent of the Will? Baxt. Direct. p. 97. Hammond of Wilful Sins. Suarez.

not to have made haſt to any Determination of it ſelf, before the alluring Object had on all Sides been thoroughly viewed, and reviewed.

III. Sin is Folly, as it argues *Weakneſs of Judgment*. Sinners are firſt groſſly ignorant of the beſt, the greateſt, and weightieſt Matters of Knowledge. 2. If they have any competent Knowledge, they do not duly conſider what they know; and 3. If they do any whit conſider, they firſt make a wrong Judgment of what is Good, and fitting; And ſecondly, are unſteady and wavering in the Judgment they have made; both which are the Acts of Folly; As to make a right Judgment, and to have the Mind quieted, fixed, and ſettled, is the chief Act of Wiſdom; as *Ariſtotle* hath admirably obſerved ^a. For Wiſdom doth not chiefly conſiſt in much Knowledge, or a warm Imagination, witty Conceptions and Expreſſions, nor even in a quick Apprehenſion, and cloſeneſs of Reaſoning (for all this is conſiſtent with what the Scripture calls Folly) but in Judging with a ſteady, calm, and compoſed Mind, according to right Reaſon, and Divine Revelation, (thoſe ſteady and uniform Rules of Judgment and Action) what End is beſt for Man amongſt many, which ſtand in Competition; and which are the beſt Means, by which that End may be obtained; which are the Cha-

^a Nat. Aufcult. 7. 4. Num. 15.

raſters of a wiſe Man; he being ſuch that underſtands his trueſt Intereſt, and the moſt ſuitable Means to arrive at it; and ſteadily and diſcreetly purſues both.

Now who does not readily perceive, that Sinners are Fools in this reſpect? For,

IV. They firſt propound to themſelves a *wrong End*, through Error of Judgment, or for want of an Underſtanding duly rectified (which is properly Error) judging unſatisfactory temporary Good, Convenience, or Pleaſure, to be the chief Good; and preferring it, and the Things of this World, to the eternal Happineſs of the other; chiefly becauſe the former are preſent and viſible, and the latter are at a Diſtance, and inviſible; which is certainly extream Folly; becauſe the Sinner in this Inſtance takes that to be his Happineſs, which he is ſure he cannot enjoy very long, and is not certain but he may be deprived of next Moment; and eſteems it above a future Happineſs, although Eternal, only becauſe it is preſent to his Senſes, which can ſee only into the outward Superſicies of Things, and can penetrate no further. Whereas God, and the inviſible Things of his Grace here, and his Glory hereafter, although inviſible to the Senſes, are viſible by Faith to the Soul, and leave a powerful internal Senſation, an experimental Taſte upon it, and can be proved
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by Reason the superior Faculty, to have an Existence, by many clear and unanswerable Arguments; and to be the only satisfactory Things to the rational Nature: And if so, is it not Folly, and contrary to the true Interest of a Man, to take that for his Happiness, which though it were equal in Pleasure to the other, yet ought not to be preferred to it? Because of the vast disproportion which there is in their Continuance, the one being but for a short Moment, the other Eternal.

2^{dly}, The Sinner is guilty of Folly in his Judgment of the *Means* to his End; his End is to enjoy a present, sensible, temporary Happiness; and the Means he makes use of to this End, is an inordinate, restless, laborious Pursuit after Pleasures, Profits, or Honours, in the Enjoyment of which he judges his Happiness to consist. But if the End be Folly, and there is nothing really satisfactory but Virtue and Integrity, a good Conscience, and the Hopes and Expectation of Eternal Happiness; then the Means leading to such an End, must needs be foolish too; which receive their Value, and Esteem, and Denomination of Goodness from the End, and are desirable only in order to it. (*Finis dat mediis Amabilitatem.*) As a Traveller who proposes to himself a wrong Place for his Journey's End, goes amiss every Step he takes towards it: So he who
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proposes a foolish End, for the Aim and Design of the whole Course of his Life, must needs act foolishly in the Means he uses, because they lead not to the *true End*. And not only so, but also he acts foolishly, because the *Means* he uses will not attain even the *temporary Happiness* he designs; Experience frequently shewing us, that worldly Enjoyments fall infinitely short of true Happiness. He wearies himself in vain, and his Folly is *Deceit*; not only the *End* of his Labour is Heaviness and Death, but the *Way* to it too; as being full of Danger, Trouble, many Disappointments, anxious Cares, and Fears in the obtaining, and remorse of Conscience in the Enjoyment of them.

If then, 3^{dly}, The Sinner judge foolishly with respect to his *End*, and the *Way* to it, it will follow, that the Will must needs make a foolish Choice with respect to both, because it follows the Judgment of the Understanding.

The Understanding misleads the Will,
1. By its disesteem of God, Grace, and Glory, for want of being spiritually minded, arising from its wilful indisposedness to know the Truth, especially concerning Good and Evil; its unacquaintedness with spiritual Things; its natural Darkness, and want of Light to discover the higher Truths of the other World, and propose them with clear-
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ness and efficacy to the Will. 2. It misleads the Will, by mis-esteeming, or over-valuing transitory Things, fleshly Pleasure, worldly Prosperity: And then if the *Blind will* have a *blind Guide*, must not its Choice be blind and foolish too; must it not be according to those false Apprehensions, which the Understanding is prepossessed with, and which blind it and make it resist the Truth?

Doth it not become us then to endeavour to the utmost after the Sanctification of our Understandings, that so we may not be summoned into the other World with a *Thou Fool*? How will that upbraiding, opprobrious Title encrease our Anguish? and will it not be no small part of our Torment, to be Self-convicted of *Folly*; to have our own Consciences, as well as our Judge, and our Executioners, brand us with that Character? Ah what a foolish Thing is Sin, which has its Value only from Opinion, Fancy, and Imagination; whose Expectation is Disappointment, and whose Pleasure is Momentary, perishing in the very Enjoyment of it. And how foolish then must Man be, who undergoes so great Pains to compass so foolish a Thing; and who will suffer himself to be cheated of eternal Happiness by Vanity, by Folly, by that which is *Nothing after* the Enjoyment; but is past and gone, and leaves behind it a tormenting Sting in the Conscience. Ah foolish Men, and unwise! let

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us no longer be so absurd, so unmanly, so *ridiculously foolish* (and what greater Aggravation of a Thing can there be?) as to provoke God's Justice; resist his Almighty Power; thwart his infinite Wisdom, and all for Gawdy, Imaginary, Phantastick, Perishing Vanities: But let us be so Wise as to endeavour to serve God after such a manner here, as that we may be Happy with him to all Eternity hereafter.



SERMON



SERMON VI.

The Slavery of Sin.

JOHN VIII. 34.

Whosoever committeth Sin, is the Servant of Sin.



Have at former Opportunities endeavour'd to draw Men off from Sin, by offering them proper Convictions of the evil Malignity of it in its own Nature; and the evil Effects it has upon their Souls and Bodies; and have already shewn you, that Atheism, Rebellion, and Idolatry, inseparably cleave to all Sin; and have displayed in some Measure the *Folly* which accompanies it, and its contrariety to all the Dictates and Principles of true Wisdom.

I come now to shew you the *Slavery* and Bondage which it subjects the Sinner to; and to shew that they are the true *Servants* of Sin who *commit* it, that is, who give themselves up to the Commitment of it, freely, customarily, and with Delight.

Sin is Slavery, and all Sinners more or less Bondslaves ^a,

^a Cell in N. Test. Part 2. p. 43.

1st, Because they want a Power of willing, and doing according to God's Law; and are under the Power of doing contrary to it, by Virtue of their being overcome by Sin; and of their voluntary Subjection to its Power.

^a For as in Civil Account they were reckoned Slaves, who had no Power or Right to dispose of themselves, of their Time, and of their Actions ^b, but were in all these wholly under the Command of their Masters; so is it in religious and spiritual Slavery too. The Sinner has lost his Liberty, or Power of willing, and living according to God's Laws, whose *Service is perfect Freedom* ^c, and becomes a Slave to his corrupt Inclinations, and vicious Habits.

And as the Ground and Reason of Civil Slavery is founded upon Conquest, or voluntary Subjection; so is the Slavery of Sin grounded upon the like Reasons.

For (1.) Civil Bondage, or Slavery, was first brought into the World by Conquest ^d; and so was the Slavery of Sin too, for it conquer'd our first Parents in Paradise, when they were overcome by the Temptations of the Devil.

^a Jackson *Tom.* 3. p. 40. *Tom.* 2. 788. *Parable* 541.

^b Jackson 3. 41. 48.

^c Jackson 3. p. 48, 49.

^d Jackson 43. 46, 47, 48.

(2.) As the Conquer'd lost their Civil Liberty for their Posterity, as well as for themselves; so did the Posterity of *Adam* also lose much of their Freedom, by being subject to the Bondage of Original Corruption^a; which is by the Craft of Satan made the chief Instrument of withdrawing us from God's Service, (which is Freedom to the Slavery of Sin,) and by that to the eternal hellish Bondage of Satan^b. For a Man is drawn away of his own Lust, and enticed, *James* 1. *Vers.* 14.

But (3.) As some were made Slaves unwillingly, and remained such only by Constraint^c, being conquer'd by the Sword in Battle, or circumvented by some Guile, or Stratagem; so is it in this spiritual Servitude too; of which there are several Sorts or Degrees. Some are conquer'd by Satan through Cowardice, who are more deservedly Slaves than others, but yet would willingly be deliver'd afterwards; and repenting take more Courage, and strive to gain their Freedom. Some are taken by surprize, and fall into some Act of Sin, through Inadvertency, or Weakness: And others are not taken, but after long resistance, and a doubtful Fight, whose Case is the most pitiable: Some are

^a *Jackf. Tom.* 3. p. 43.

^b *Jackf. Tom.* 3. 28, 38, 78. sub fin. & 79--*What freedom the Unregenerate have.* & 17, 39, 67, 68.

^c *Pembl.* 545. *Jackf.* 43, 47, 48.

not thoroughly deliver'd from their Bondage, but in part only ^a, the Flesh still lasting against the Spirit, but not overcoming it, or gaining its consent, at least in any considerable Instance: And those few excellent Christians, who have so far mortified the Flesh, as to have brought it in subjection to the Spirit, although they are thoroughly regenerate, that is, in all their Faculties, in their Bodies, Souls, and Spirits; are not yet perfectly regenerated, but have some Degrees of Corruption remaining in them, from which they will not be perfectly deliver'd in this Life.

Now these, and such like sincere, godly Persons, who are only subject to Sins of Infirmary, and are under some Degrees of Servitude to Sin; if they groan under their Burthen, and earnestly long to be deliver'd from it, and use their utmost Endeavours to this End; sighing and praying earnestly to God, as the *Israelites* did when under Bondage in *Egypt*; and earnestly waiting for, and expecting the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; they are not accounted *Slaves* to Sin by God; but are his *Servants*; yea, free in Christ from the Condemnation of the Law; free from the dominion of Sin: And the more or less free from the Degrees of its Power, the more or less they are God's Ser-

^a Jackf. 42. in fin.

vants. For the Son of God makes them free, upon which Account they are *Free indeed*^a: And the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, hath *made them free* from the Law of Sin, and Death.

For the Sins of a sincere Christian are, in some respects, much different from those of the Wicked and Ungodly. For the Bent and habitual Inclination of his Will is against all Sin whatsoever, although through the Violence of the Temptation, or some other Accident, he chance to fall at that time into it. And the *main* Course and *tenour* of his Life is according to God's Law; although perhaps he sometimes fail in some lesser Instances. His Sins are rather Sins of Passion, than of Interest and Choice, of Nature and Constitution, rather than any contracted *habit*; and are generally such as the Will cannot so easily command; or are not wholly under its Power; such as wandring Thoughts, sudden Passions of Anger, Grief, Fear, or the like, proceeding from Inconsideration and Surprize. But then even no sin *possesses* his *Heart*. His *Love*, and his *Affections*, and the habitual Course of his Thoughts and Actions, are still set upon God, and Heaven, and Holiness; and he has no other *ultimate* chief End of his Life than God, and his Glory; no other Happiness than the Enjoyment of

^a Jacks. *Tom.* 3. 68.

God in his Graces here, and in his Glorious Presence hereafter; and he hath made choice of no other Master than Christ to teach him, and bring him to God. And if he chance to fall into any more than ordinary Sin, he immediately repents of it, hates, abhors, and forsakes it; his Repentance is always more remarkable than his Sin was.

I do not in this make an Apology for Sin, nor even for the godly Sinner; for I do not say but that he is a Sinner, and whilst such, under God's displeasure; but only shew you that the Case of a godly Man, or a sincere Christian fall'n into Sin, and of a wilful Sinner, are much different; that the Godly is not a Slave to his Passions; but often overcomes, and subdues them; and is in a State of War, and gradual Conquest over the least of his Imperfections. He never sells himself to do Wickedness, although he may sometimes be overpower'd by the tyranny of his corrupt Nature; like a Slave forced by Violence to be subject to a domineering Tyrannical Master. But he accounts not his Chains, although they were of Gold, his Ornaments; but resists, and thwarts every corrupt Affection to the most tempting Objects; even to the Pleasures, Profits and Honours of this World ^a.

^a Jackson 3. 54.

And therefore let not the wicked World make their boast, and triumph so much over the infirmities and falls of sincere upright Christians, for their Cases are very much different; and there is no reason for them to magnifie the Falls of others so much as they do. But nevertheless the Sins of the sincerely Godly, are Sins, as well as those of others; and the more to be avoided by them, the more Scandal they give to others.

But 3^{dly}, 'The wilful Sinner, who continues habitually in sin, and customarily commits Sins, which through the Grace of God, upon the use of Means, are avoidable by all Christians, is most properly a slave to Sin: His bondage is wilful, for he either sold himself to be a Slave (as was, and is still usual in some Countries) or else if he were made so by Force or Stratagem, he wilfully continues such, and shakes not his Chains with just Indignation against those, who had unjustly made him so. There are two Phrases in Scripture with relation to this Matter, capable of a much different Construction. The one is that of the Apostle, (*Rom. 7. 14.*) where describing himself, or another (of which I shall not dispute) as held under Sin; The other is that in *1 Kings 21. 20.* where it is said of *Abab*, that he had sold himself to work Evil in the Sight of the Lord. The former Phrase refers to those who are unwillingly under the bondage of natural Corruption,

ruption, or some lesser Infirmities, prevailing over them, and answer to that of Slaves, who were unwillingly sold by others, (as *Joseph* was by his Brethren) and unwillingly continue such when they are sold. The other expresses the Condition of wilful Sinners, especially of those who have wilfully given themselves over to commit all manner of Sin maliciously, and with greediness; which is the greatest Slavery imaginable on this side Hell. For there are several Degrees of wilful Slavery^a, or of want of Power to desire and do Good, and a Kind of Necessity of desiring and doing Evil, contracted by wilful Sinners.

(1.) Some have no Desire to do that Good which God has commanded them; which arises chiefly from a wilful Ignorance of their Duty, which they never endeavour'd to know; or a wilful sluggishness and neglect to stir up their Desires, and exercise those Faculties of the Soul, which God hath given them. Which is the Case of many Souls, who are destroyed for lack of Knowledge, and labour under the lamentable Mischiefs of Ignorance, have their Minds darkened, and the Eyes of their Understanding blinded, through the Ignorance that is in them, which is such a Disease in the Soul (as Dr. *Jackson* very well

^a Pemble 544. Jacks. Tom. 3. p. 50, 52. *at non prosequitur tertium, & quartum punctum.*

expresses ^a it) like that in some Bodies of Men, who have lost not only the Faculty of *digesting* their Meats, but even all Appetite to wholesom Food.

(2.) The wilful Sinner, first contracts an Impotency or want of Power to do that which he desires and approves; to do that which Reason, and his Conscience tells him is agreeable to God's Will: And then, Secondly, contracts a Kind of a Necessity of doing that which he does not desire, nor approve; a Necessity of doing that which in his better and calmer Thoughts he utterly condemns, and disapproves. To which State those Words of the Apostle, *Rom. 7. 15.* may be well applyed; *What I would, that I do not, but what I hate, that I do.*

(3.) From these two States the Sinner at last proceeds to a Necessity not only of doing, but of desiring and approving what he ought not to desire, will, and approve; and had before disapproved: Which is a Malady of Soul like to a ravenous Appetite in the Body, after such things as are unnatural, and loathsome to others, and were so to our selves, before we contracted that Disease.

We all naturally profess to love Liberty; and yet when we commit Sin, we voluntarily make our selves Slaves to the most Tyrannical Masters, *Sin* and *Satan*, who lead

^a Jackf. *Tom.* 3. p. 51.

and govern us according to their own Will. Assert then the true Liberty of your Wills, and subject them to God's Laws, whose Service is perfect Freedom; a Freedom from Sin, and a Liberty to do Good, which is the true Birth-right of a Son of God, and the Original Liberty of which Man was possessed in Innocency. This may be attained in part by us in this Life, if we give our Souls up to Christ in Well-doing, that they may be made free from Sin by him, according to the Measure of Freedom they are capable of here; that so they may be made perfectly free, and absolutely determin'd to Good with him to all Eternity hereafter.





SERMON VII.

Sins unto Death.

DEUTERON. XXXII. 5.

Their Spot is not the Spot of his Children.

1 JOHN V. 16, 17.

—There is a Sin unto Death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it. All Unrighteousness is Sin, and there is a Sin not unto Death.

GALAT. V. 19, 20, 21.



HERE are few Truths in the whole Book of God of greater Importance to the Quiet of Men's Consciences, and the Salvation of their Souls, than those which do arise from a right Decision of the great and weighty Questions which result from these Words of Scripture. For what can be of greater Use to us in the Way to everlasting Happiness; or what safer Ground can there be for true Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, than to know which are those Sins unto

unto Death, that debar us of our Right to the Kingdom of Heaven, and are such Spots for Sins, as are not the *Spots of God's Children*, and are inconsistent with the State of Sonship and Grace: And on the contrary, which are those that are not inconsistent with such a State, and are not Sins unto Death, and shall never be placed to our Account at the last Day: that so having a rational, well-grounded, sufficient Assurance of the Integrity and Sincerity of our Hearts and Lives, we may have an humble Confidence towards God, as a reconciled Father in Christ, and boldness in the Day of Judgment, through the Merits and Satisfaction of our blessed Redeemer; as having no Spots which are inconsistent with that Purity, which he will accept of in his Children; none from which Christ's Blood will not wash and cleanse us.

I shall therefore endeavour to shew,

1. What Sin is.
2. What is meant by a Sin unto Death and by a Sin not unto Death; and by the Spots which are not the Spots of God's Children, and those which are.
3. Which Sins are Sins unto Death, and which not: or which Spots (or Sins) are inconsistent with a State of Sonship, Grace, and Salvation; and which not.

Which I shall endeavour by these following Steps and Degrees.

I. Eve-

I. Every Dissonancy from, or Repugnancy and Contrariety to the Law of God, is Sin; according to the Definition of Sin given us by the Apostle, 1 *John* 3. 4. *Whosoever committeth Sin, transgresseth the Law; for Sin is the Transgression of the Law.* It is (*ἀνομία*) a *Lawlessness*, a Privation, or want of that Conformity to the Law of God, which he requireth of us.

From whence it will follow, that not only every actual Sin, of Omission and Commission, whether in Thought, Word, or Deed, are strictly and properly Sins; but also every evil and corrupt Habit^a or Inclination, howsoever it came into us, either by our own Fault, or the Fault of others, is also a Sin, in the largest Acceptation of that Word; because it is something dissonant from the pure and perfect Law of God. All Unrighteousness is Sin, 1 *Job*. 5. 17. Every Declination or Aberration from the upright Law of God is Sin; it is against the Law of God, which^b prohibits the least Sin, and the^c End of the Law, the Love of God above all things; it includes in it an^d Aversion from God to the Creature; it dissolves the Band^e of

^a Pearson on the Creed. Voßii Histor. Pelag. 140, 141, 226, 229, 239, 240.

^b Baronius de Peccat. Mortali in Pag. 18, 20, 84, 112, 130, 142.

^c Baronius, *ibid.* 119.

^d Baronius de Peccat. Mortal. 126, 131.

^e Baronius, *ibid.* 102.

Friendship betwixt God and Man; leaves a Stain, a Polution, a Defilement, a Filthiness, and at least a ^a Spot behind it, and a Guilt or Obligation to ^b Punishment.

2^{dly}, Sin, all Sin whatsoever, renders a Man liable or ^c obnoxious to the Wrath of God, and to those Punishments, which are denounced in Scripture against the Transgressors of his holy and perfect Laws, which are Death, temporal Death, spiritual Death, or the Loss of God's Favour and Grace, which is the Life of the Soul; and Eternal Death, which is an eternal Separation from God, attended with positive Punishment. *In the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die*; thou shalt be liable and obnoxious to it; Sin and its Punishment lyeth at the Door: He that committeth the least Sin (by being but angry with his Brother) is liable, obnoxious, or bound over to the Judgment, or to Hell Fire: All Men are fallen short of the Glory of God, and are by Nature, even from the Womb, Children of Wrath, *i. e.* liable or obnoxious to it.

^a Baronius, 11, 12, 59, 63.

^b Baron. W. 1, 102. Pearson on the Creed 360. But it is not agreed what sort of Damnation Concupiscence, or Original Sin, deserveth of it self. Vossius Histor. Pelag. 141, 226, 251, 194. Charadiet. Epilog. Part 2. p. 161, 162. And Concupiscence is attended with other Punishments in this World. Voss. Ibid. 138, 140, 141. At Vide Baxter. Or Bull's Appendix ad Exam. Animadver. 17.

^c Voss. 194. Pearson on the Creed.

3^{dly}, Every Sin of it self, even the least Sin, renders a Man liable to God's Wrath, altho' not to equal Degrees of Punishment. He that offendeth in one Point is guilty of All, but not as to Obligation to equal Degrees of Punishment; for Sins are not equal, and therefore neither can the Punishment of them be so; some are of a more heinous Nature than others; Murther being a more grievous Sin than sudden rash Anger; and he that Sins out of Ignorance, deserving to be beaten with *fewer Stripes* than the wilful Transgressor, *Matth. 5. 21, 22. Luk. 12. 46, 47. Hebr. 10. 29.*

4^{thly}, Upon this Inequality betwixt Sins, it pleased God that some Sins (notwithstanding their Defects) should not actually be punish'd with Eternal Death, but only those which he hath forbid under that Penalty, which are called *Sins unto Death* in Scripture, and commonly *Mortal* and *Deadly* Sins. By Sins unto Death, are meant those Sins, which by the Law of God are to be punish'd with *Temporal Death* by the Magistrate, and are consequently properly Sins unto Death, that is, Death by the Hands of Justice; the Pardon of which deserv'd Punishment is not to be ordinarily prayed for by us, because the ordinary Pardon of such capital Offences is against God's Law, and the Publick Good. We ought to pray for the
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the Salvation of their Souls; but not for their temporal Pardon; or if we do, the Apostle tells us, that we cannot expect that our Prayers shall be heard; He shall Ask in Prayer, and God shall give him Life for them that sin not unto Death; There is a Sin unto Death; I do not say that he shall pray for it. 2^{dly}, They are called Sins unto Death, because that at last God is provok'd to cut the Sinner off by some *extraordinary Judgment*, as he did *Korah* and his Company, and *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; and such also is the Case of those who after frequent Convictions and Warnings of Conscience have died in and by their Sins; as by and in a drunken Debauch, a leud Embrace, or a revengeful Quarrel. 3. They are called Sins unto Death, because they are Sins unto *Spiritual* Death; which consists in being depriv'd of the Love, Grace and Favour of God, which is the *Life* of the Soul. 4. They are called Sins unto Death, because they are Sins unto *Eternal* Death, which consists in a separation of the Soul from God to all Eternity, or in a State of *Damnation*; upon which account they are called Damnable Sins.

These Sins are also called in Scripture *Presumptuous* Sins, and by Divines *Wilful* Sins, because they are in the Power of the *Will* to avoid, through that Measure of the Grace of God, which he will not deny any one, who asks for it by hearty Prayer, and makes
due

due Use of it, when he hath given it him: Of which there are several Catalogues in Scripture, which do not indeed comprehend all the particular Sins of this Nature, but have sometimes this Addition, and *such like*, to shew that there were others of the like Nature; that is, other gross Sins, or Crimes, the *Doers* of which shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Thus *Exod.* 21. 14. *Numb.* 15. 29, 30. *Deut.* 17. 12, 13. we read of sinning presumptuously, or with a high Hand, so as to despise the Word of the Lord, and to Reproach him; and that the Soul which sinned after this latter manner was to be utterly cut off from amongst the People, and to have his Iniquity remain upon him. And in the 19th *Psalms*, Vers. 13. *David* earnestly prays that he might be kept back from *presumptuous Sins*, that so he might be innocent from the *great Transgression* of Final Impenitence and Apostacy. And in the First Chapter to the *Romans*, 29, 32. 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10. *Eph.* 5. 5. *Gal.* 5. 19. Adultery, Fornication, Envyings, Murthers, Drunkenness, Hatred, Variance, and *such like*; are expressly said to exclude Men from the Kingdom of Heaven.

But how shall we know, may you say, what Sins are to be accounted *such like*, or Sins unto Death of the same damnable Nature with those which are there particularly mention'd? I answer,

First,

First, That it must be a wilful Sin, or such an one as is in the Power of the *Will* to avoid; or a Sin *avoidable* by us. For if the Sin of *Apostacy* (*Hebr.* 10. 26.) would not have been *damnable*, except it had been *wilful*; much less will *other* Sins be so.

Secondly, It must be a Sin against Knowledge, or a Transgression of some Law of God, by the consent of our Wills to it, which we *know* at the time of committing it to be forbidden by him; or *might* have *known* to be so, if we would. For Sins committed without our *Knowing*, or *Bethinking* our selves of them when we commit them, are Wilful Sins against *Knowledge*, if our not thinking, and observing of them were contracted through an ill *Habit*, and *Custom* of Sinning, or *Neglect* of knowing our Duty. As Swearing, or Lying without thinking, or knowing that we do so, is certainly a Sin against the Knowledge we ought to have; and is a Wilful Sin, or an Evil Habit wilfully contracted, which it was in the Power of our Wills to have prevented or broken. And such like Ignorance is so far from being an Excuse for Sin, that it is an Aggravation of it; and such a contracted Disposition is the Habit, or the *Law of Sin*, and *part of the Body of Death in us*.

Thirdly, Any one *single* Act of Wilful Sin, although it be immediately repented of, and never committed again for the Future,

ture, does in that space of Time in which it is unrepented of, subject the Sinner to God's displeasure. For all Wilful Sin contracts Guilt, and all Guilt is displeasing to God; neither is there any Wilful Sin, which is not the Work of Deliberation, and Time, and some space there must be betwixt the committing of the Sin and the repenting of it, in all which time the Sinner must be supposed to lye under an actual Guilt, and consequently the Displeasure of God. For upon the Commission of any single Act of Sin, Satan (as it were) appears before the Tribunal of God (as in the Case of *Job* 1. 6, 7. and of *Joshua* the High-Priest, *Zach.* 3. 1, 2, 3, &c.) and straightways accuses the Sinner of a wilful breach of God's Law; and then upon Accusation proceeds to require, and as it were solemnly demand, that he might be delivered over unto him, to be winnowed and sifted as Wheat, by Temptations, and inflictions of Temporal Punishments, which God sometimes permits, as in the Case of *Job*, and *St. Peter*, *Matth.* 22. 31. and sometimes refuses, as in that of *Josua* the High-Priest, *Zach.* 3. 2. Every such delivery over unto Satan is accompanied sometimes with outward Afflictions, always with Temptations; yet in this case God never suffers any one to be tempted above what he is able, but does with the Temptation also make a Way to escape: He either
gives

gives him Power and Ability to bear it, or grants him a speedy passage out of it. He never sends a Thorn in the Flesh, or the Messenger of Satan to buffet us, but he withal opens a Door of Hope, and lets us know, that his Grace is sufficient for us, (2 Cor. 12. 9.) For although most commonly upon deliberate Acts of Sin, God does suffer Satan to lead Men into Temptation, and shews his just Displeasure and Resentment of it, by withdrawing those greater Degrees of Grace which he had before afforded them; yet it is (upon immediate Repentance) only the Displeasure and Chastisement of a Father; only a withdrawing of wanted Grace and Favour; not Wrath, or a total withholding of Grace and Mercy for the present; much less Fury, or a Final irreversibile Sentence of Condemnation, which is the Portion only of finally impenitent Sinners. He therefore only withdraws his wonted Grace for a Time, that by their finding the Want of it, they might put the higher Value on it, and seek it more earnestly: He therefore suffers them to be tempted, that their hatred for Sin might be encreased, *ἵνα παιδεύῃται αὐτὸν ὁ βλασφημῶν* (1 Tim. 1. 20.) that they might be thereby disciplin'd and instructed not to sin against God; *εἰς ὅλεθρον σαρκὸς* (1 Cor. 5. 5.) he permits it for the destruction and extirpation of their fleshly Lusts, that the Spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.

From what has been said we are diligently to take notice of the great Mischief and Danger of every single Act of Wilful Sin; For (1.) it wounds the Soul and the Conscience, it makes us incur God's displeasure for the Time, grieves his Spirit, and forces him to withdraw his more powerful Assistances, and deliver us over to the Tempter, to be buffeted for our Faults. And (2^{dly}) it may prove (for ought we know) the cause of our everlasting Ruin and Destruction, if God should visit us with Death in the actual Commitment of it, before we had space for Repentance.

If God upon the Commission of a single Act of Sin, although immediately repented of, does ordinarily deliver the Sinner over to the Tempter, and in some proportion withdraws the Influences of his Spirit, how will a presumptuous Sin *unrepented* of grieve his Spirit (*Eph. 4. 30.*) especially if it be one of those Sins of a deeper Die, against which eternal Damnation is pronounced in Scripture, and an utter Exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven; a black Catalogue of which the Apostle has given us, *Gal. 5. 19. 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10.* and *Ephes. 5. 5.* And whosoever dies in any one of such Act of Sin, which God has threatened with Eternal Death, unrepented of, although he never committed it but once in his whole Life, yet if he never

ver retracted that single Act by Repentance, never shewed any godly Sorrow for it, he is liable to be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven; although not punishable with so severe Degrees of Torment, as he who habitually persists in many wilful Sins. It being certain, that without Repentance there is no Remission of the least wilful Sin, for whosoever shall offend in one Point is guilty of all (St. *James* 2. 10.) So that there is no true Repentance without ^agodly Sorrow.

Fourthly, Every wilful, *habitual Sin*, that is, every wilful Sin customarily persisted and continued in, whilst unrepented of, is irreconcilable with a State of Grace; and if continued in until the Time of Death, does utterly exclude from Eternal Salvation. This Proposition is obvious in it self, and does plainly follow from the former; for if every *single Act* be irreconcilable with Grace and Salvation, then much more will *many Acts*, or the *Habit* be.

Fifthly, A wilful Habit of Negligence in spiritual Duties, or in those of our particular Callings, wilful Omissions of any of God's Commands, carelessness and sloth in Duty, wilful Neglect of the Means of Knowledge, not using our utmost Endeavours to get out of a Course of Sin, or not avoiding

^a Vide Baxter's *Method for Peace of Conscience*, p. 265.

all Occasions of Falling, are sins of Omission, and sins unto Death, utterly irreconcilable with that sincerity of Endeavour which the Gospel requires; they are Acts of Faithfulness and Perverseness, as our Saviour calls them, *Matth. 17. 17.* when he rebuked his Disciples for not Fasting and Praying, not using those Endeavours which were requisite for the casting out some Kinds of unclean Spirits.

Sixthly. Whosoever indulges himself in any one wilful Sin through the whole Course of his Life, and defers the Repentance of it to his Death-Bed, can have no Ground from Reason or Scripture, to expect that God then will give him that Grace of Repentance, which he had for so long Time wilfully neglected. There is no doubt but that God will accept of a Death-Bed Repentance, if it be true and sincere; for *Nunquam sera est Penitentia si sit vera.* Repentance is never too late, if it be true. But then, how can any Man be assured that his Death-Bed Repentance will be true? Nay, why ought he not to fear the contrary? Especially if he considers not only his former wilful continuance in Sinning, but the very Nature of Repentance, which is not so easie a Thing as most Men imagine. For it does not consist only in dying Tears or Groans, in a few Prayers and Ejaculations, and a faint Lord have Mercy upon us; but in much Fighting
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and Striving against Sin, in a daily Mortification and Conquest over our Lusts and Affections; in a thorough Change of Mind, and an actual Amendment of Life. Now the utmost that a Death-Bed Repentance can pretend to, is only a Resolution of Amendment for the Future, which if it be sincere, God will consider after a merciful manner.

But of that no Man can ordinarily be assured upon his Death-bed; because no Man can be ordinarily certain of the Sincerity of his Resolutions, by the actual Tryal of them, by the Signs, Effects, and Fruits of them, in the actual Amendment of his Life and Conversation, which in this Case cannot be supposed. And that any wilful habitual Sinner, who has resisted the Checks of Conscience, the Threats of God's Word, and the Motions of his Holy Spirit, should think that after all God should afford him an extraordinary Assurance of the Sincerity of his Resolutions, is certainly very high Presumption, especially when he resolves to leave off Sinning only then when he can sin no more.

I have the longer insisted upon this Head, because it is a dangerous popular Error, and one of the most successful Engines which Satan uses for the Destruction of Mens Souls. For it is upon the Security of a *Death-bed* Repentance that Men lull their Consciences asleep, grow careless and negligent in spi-

ritual Duties, nay, stupid and insensible. For why should they deny their Youth all its sensual Delights and Extravagancies? Why should their more manly Age be stopped in the Ambitious pursuit of Honour and Riches? Why should not old Age be Peevish, Self-conceited and Covetous? Why should not every part of our Life enjoy its proper Sins and Pleasures, if a Death-bed Repentance may suffice, and that evil Day may be put so far from us?

But alas, what is this but to defer the Quenching of a Fire, till the Flame is about our Ears; to begin to live when Death hath laid hold on us, and the Grave open its Mouth to swallow us up.



SERMON VIII.

Of Sins not unto Death.

DEUTERON. XXXII. 5.

Their Spot is not the Spot of his Children.

1 JOH. V. vers. 16, 17.

—There is a Sin unto Death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All Unrighteousness is Sin, and there is a Sin not unto Death.



Have shewn what Sins are Sins unto Death, and inconsistent with a State of Sonship and Grace, with that good Conversation which God requires of all those, on whom he will bestow the Mercies of the Gospel; that is, continuance of Grace, Pardon, and Remission of Sins, and the Consequence of them, Eternal Happiness.

I now proceed to shew what Sins are not Sins unto Death, and are reconcileable with the Mercies of the Gospel. For that there are some Sins or Spots, which are the Spots of Sons, my Text supposes, and Experience
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and Scripture confirm. For who does not find that he carries some natural Infirmities about him, which it is not in his Power wholly to conquer and amend? Who is not sometimes overborn with sudden Acts of immoderate Anger, Fear, Love, Joy, or Sorrow? Who is not sometimes so violently assaulted with Temptation, so surrounded with the Snares and Wiles of the Tempter, that it is not possible for him to escape? Who does not either through Inconsideration, or the Indisposition of his natural Faculties (as being unable to be always upon his Guard, and having not himself always at his own Command) or through a Crowd and multiplicity of Business, in which his Calling and State of Life engages him, frequently fall into many Errors and Miscarriages, which he did not think of, or had no Liberty to consider?

Now that these and such like Sins, through the Mercy of God under the second Covenant, and for the Merits of the Blood of our Saviour, will not be imputed to any one, who humbles his Soul in Confession for them, begs Pardon in Christ's Name, and uses his utmost sincere endeavour against them, although they are not wholly conquer'd, overcome and forsaken, but cleave and stick to him even unto the Hour of his Death, is a Truth which none, who understands the purport of the second Covenant
and

and his own Infirmities ought to doubt of. The only Difficulty is, to determine what those Sins are. For the Apostle plainly tells us, that there is now under the Gospel (*Gal. 5. 21.*) no Condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, provided they walk not after the Flesh. And if in many Things we offend all, and there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth good and sinneth not (as the ^a Scripture and Experience assure us) there must needs be some Sins which are consistent with a State of Justification, and Salvation; or else there can be no just Man upon Earth; and the whole Race of Mankind will be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven; And Christ himself is said to have taken our Infirmities, and born our Sicknesses (*Matth. 8. 7.*) and to be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, and to have Compassion of the Ignorant, and them that are out of the Way, because that he himself was compassed ^b with Infirmities, *Hebr. 4. 15. 5. 2.* And the Apostle says (*1 Tim. 1. 13.*) That he obtained Mercy, because he did sin *ignorantly* and in *unbelief*. From which Passages we may gather in general, that Sins of Ignorance, and Sins of Infirmity, are not Sins unto Death; but are consistent with a State of Grace, and Salva-

^a Prov. 20. 9. Eccles. 7. 20. Jam. 3. 2. 1 Joh. 1. 8.

^b Levit. 4. 2. Numb. 15. 22. Psalm 77. 10. 19. 13.

tion: Which are the Two general Branches of Sins of Weakness, (as some ^a Divines speak) which they make to be of two sorts, Sins of Ignorance; which are Sins against the Light God affords us; and Sins of Infirmitie, which are Sins against the Grace and Strength God affords us.

And 1. Sins of *Ignorance* are not Sins unto Death, and are consistent with a State of Grace and Salvation, as proceeding from some Weakness and Error in the Understanding. Now this Ignorance is twofold; First, an Ignorance in a particular Matter of Fact, after I have used my utmost Endeavours to come to the Knowledge of it; which is on all Hands granted to excuse from Sin. As *Abimelech* (*Gen. 20.*) was excused by God from the Sin of Adultery, in taking to him *Abraham's* Wife; because he was wholly ignorant that she was so, as having been assured by them that she was his Sister.

^a Dr. Hammond's *Practical Catech.* pag. 288. and his *Practical Discourses of Sins of Weakness; and of Conscience.* Sander-son's *Sermons*, Part 1. p. 47. Part 2. p. 263. Baxter's *Method of Comfort*, &c. p. 256, 262, 264, 345. His *Way to Concord*, p. 178, 181. Stillingfleet's *Sermon of Sins of Omission.* Kettlewell's *Christian Believer*, Part 2. Wharton's *Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 389. Baxter's *Method. Theol.* Part 1. p. 345. Bull's *Examen Confute*, p. 36, 164. Estius and Spalaterfis. Baxter's *Method of Comfort.* The true Bounds of those Sins are not assignable, p. 264. Bishop Taylor's *Practical Discourses*, p. 771.

And

And Secondly, An Ignorance in Point of Law and Duty; when a Man is ignorant, whether God has forbid the particular Sin he has committed; or commanded the particular Duty he has omitted. Thus *Abimelech*, out of Ignorance of God's Law, took Fornication (which is a grievous Sin) to be none at all, or such an one as might consist with the Integrity of his Heart, and the Innocency of his Hands; And St. *Paul's* grievous Sins against the Church of God are said to be done ignorantly, because he was ignorant of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

Now such Ignorance doth not wholly excuse from Sin; but is more or less culpable, as the Error was more or less wilful; and according to the Degrees of the Light God affords us, and the Industry we have used to come to the Knowledge of our Duty. For thus *Abimelech's* Intention of Fornication, is charged upon him as a great Sin by God, notwithstanding his Ignorance, whether it were so or no; and was grievously threatned and punish'd by God, because it was a Sin against the Light and Law of Nature, although the sinful Custom of the World, and some plausible Suggestions of the Devil, a corrupt Heart, and a defiled Imagination, vicious Inclinations indulged, and pampered by Luxury, might have silenced his Conscience, and made him judge otherwise. And thus even St. *Paul's* Zeal
against

against Christ's Church, although proceeding from the strong prejudices of Education, a good Intention, and a design of promoting God's Glory, was a Sin, and did not wholly excuse him; but it was out of God's Mercy, that he found Pardon; (1 *Tim.* 1. 13.) And notwithstanding the Excuse which his Ignorance might, in part (but not wholly) afford him; he calls himself a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious, and the chief of Sinners, at the 15th *Verse*. Although what he did was with an upright Intention, and Zeal to the Cause of God. For although Custom, Education, and other Circumstances might be a just Ground for his Excuse in part; yet because the Christian Religion was attended with so much Light from Miracles, and Prophecy fulfilled in the Person of Christ, and other Motives for believing its Divine Authority; his Ignorance could not wholly excuse him.

But yet notwithstanding this particular Case of *St. Paul*, if Christians, after their utmost and most sincere Endeavours to come to a full Knowledge of their whole Duty towards God and Man, should at last fail even in some material Instance of it; yet if this their Ignorance be supported by the general Custom and Practice of the Place in which they live, be nourished by Education, authorized by Laws, deliver'd down by the Tradition of their Forefathers, and
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recommended by the Example and Authority of their Spiritual Guides and Governors, as tending to Piety and Devotion (which seems to have been the Case of our Forefathers, in the Times before the Reformation) if it proceed, I say, from want of Ability and Opportunities, and not from wilful, culpable Neglect, we may charitably presume, that God will not, upon a general Repentance, lay this Guilt to their Charge. For if our Faith be lively and active, our Obedience hearty, and our Repentance sincere, which are the main Fundamental Duties of Christianity; and our Ignorance proceed from the forementioned or the like Circumstances, we may believe that our Sins of Ignorance will be pardon'd upon a general Repentance. For though all known Sins must be particularly repented of; yet a general Confession and Repentance is sufficient for Sins of Ignorance, because being not known, they cannot be particularly repented of.

Ignorance of Fact then (*Ignorantia facti*) doth excuse, but all Ignorance of Duty (*Ignorantia juris*) doth not; but only that which is invincible, or not in my Power to overcome, after I have endeavour'd to understand my Duty with an *Honest Heart*, or one truly desirous to know its Duty, and have used an *Honest Industry* for the Knowledge of it.

God

God hath afforded us two Rules to guide our selves by, in point of Duty ; The Light of Reason, the Law of Nature and Morality, in our Hearts and Consciences ; and the written Law or Word of God deliver'd in Scripture.

The Light of Reason and Nature is that Candle of the Lord, which he hath set up in our Hearts, to enlighten us in the Knowledge of our Duty ; and although it shine in a dark Place, in the midst of our natural Ignorance and corrupt Affections ; yet if we trim that Lamp by Industry and Carefulness, and diligent attendance to its Dictates ; it will afford us a great Measure of Light into many Parts of Knowledge, and Moral Duty, and Natural Conscience will fly in our Faces, when we transgress its Dictates ; and is a faithful Monitor, especially when it tells what Sins we are to avoid, and what we are not to do.

O take heed how you pretend Ignorance in those Matters, which Nature doth or will dictate to all, who attend to it ! how you turn your Ears from the Voice of Conscience ! for if you disobey its still Voice, it may perhaps speak unto you in Thunder ; and a Troubled Conscience may give you no Peace ; for although the Spirit of a Man may bear his Infirmities, yet a wounded Spirit who can bear. Pretend not therefore Ignorance of Duty for such Sins, as Adultery,
For:

Fornication, Theft, Cheating, Malice, Drunkenness, and the like, for they are contrary to the Light of Nature and sober Reason, and the Dictates of Natural Conscience, if duly attended to; and therefore can have no Plea from Ignorance.

The second Rule we have to direct us in the Knowledge of our Duty, is the written Word of God; especially in the last Revelation of his Will, the Gospel.

Now Ignorance in point of Duty cannot well be pleaded by us at this Noon-time of the Gospel, especially as to the chief Parts of it, upon which eternal Happiness doth necessarily depend. Ignorance not excusing when a Man may know his Duty if he will. And who can say, that God has not afforded us under the Gospel sufficient Advantages of knowing his Will, if we be not wilfully wanting to our selves? Who can say that he hath not had means enough to render him inexcusable, if he hath not sufficient Degrees of Knowledge? So that Ignorance cannot be well pleadable as to the main and essential Duties of Christianity, even by the poorest and meanest Soul in this Congregation; but it will prove to be the Effect of wilful Sloth and culpable Neglect, and to be the stopping of our Ears against the Voice of the Charmer, and shutting our Eyes at Noon-Day; to be Ignorant under so great Light, and so clear Revelations of God's Will. None can

well be supposed to be ignorant of any main Part of his Duty, who has endeavour'd to know it with an honest Heart, or a Heart truly desirous to know it. Whosoever sets about the Knowledge of it, with a sincere Resignation of himself and his own Understanding to the Belief of what shall evidently appear to be God's Will, and with hearty Resolutions of obeying what he is convinced to be so, cannot well miss of any material Truth. For if any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, *Job.* 17. 7. But then he is to make use of honest Industry too; by reading the Scriptures and other good Books, hearing of Sermons, attending upon Catechising, considering, thinking upon, and duly digesting the Truth he hath learnt, by Prayer, and the like. And if after all this he should chance to fall into some Error, he may hope in, and rest upon God for Mercy. This being a certain Truth, that God will be merciful to any one, notwithstanding his Error, who falls into it, after he has used his utmost Endeavours to come to the Knowledge of it; God punishing no Man for that which it was impossible for him to help. Believe Him that is Truth it self, who hath promised, that if thou seekest thou shalt find; if thou knockest, it shall be open'd unto thee; He hath bid thee work out thy Salvation with Fear and Trembling,
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and hath told thee, that if thou dost so, that he will work in thee both to will and to do: Do thou that Part in the Work of thy Salvation, which God enables thee to do; and He will do that which thou art not able to do. He will give thee more and more Degrees of Light, if thou duly improvest those he hath already given thee, and will encrease it, by making it shine more and more unto the perfect Day, the Day of Grace here, and the perfect Day of Eternity hereafter.





SERMON IX.

Of Spiritual Reproof, or Conviction.

JOHN XVI. 8.

And when he is come, he will reprove the World of Sin.

The Context runs thus, Verse 7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*



Intend through God's Assistance, to discourse unto you from these Words, concerning the Nature of *Spiritual Reproof*, or Gospel-Conviction ; the first and great Instrument, whereby the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, comes to Souls, and they are brought back to God, from whom they have departed by Sin. And this I shall endeavour to perform chiefly by stating the Matter as plainly as I can, and placing it in the best Light I am able, for then there may be little need of Persuasion to bring Christians to
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to the Acknowledgment of its Truth, and to a Life according to it, if they do not resolve to hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, (*Rom.* 1. 18) that is, unjustly stifle it, by Virtue of that Power which unrighteous or sinful Lusts and Passions have over our Understandings: For the Gospel of Christ is still the *Power of God* unto Salvation (*Rom.* 1. 16.) and our Faith stands not in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God; and although it may at first seem to some to be *foolishness* (*1 Cor.* 1. 18, 21.) yet it is in it self ordinarily operative upon the Soul, by the Spirit, and will appear to be the *Wisdom of God* (*Rom.* 11. 33. *1 Cor.* 2. 6. *Ephes.* 3. 18.) but in a *Mystery* (and to contain in it the Breadth and Length, the Depth and Height, all the Dimensions of Wisdom and Knowledge) that is, which cannot be fully comprehended by our limited Understandings. One Branch of this mysterious Knowledge, or one of the deep Things which the Spirit teacheth (*1 Cor.* 2. 10, 11.) and worketh more or less in the Soul, before it converts it, or turns it to God, after a saving Manner, is Reproof, or *Conviction*, which may be described to be, *The Work of the Spirit on the whole Soul, through the Word of God; whereby it is brought to consider, know, and be sensible of the Evil of Sin, and its own miserable State by Reason of it.*

(1.) It is a *Work of the Spirit*, the Principal *Efficient* Cause of it, whose Office it is, as our Saviour in my Text assures us, to reprove, or convince the World of Sin (*Joh. 16. 8.*)

(2.) The *Word of God* is the chief *Instrumental* Cause, or the Means God makes use of to this End. Publick Judgments, and Mercies; private and personal Afflictions, and Deliverances; natural Hopes and Fears; and other such like Motives, are of great use, in order of Preparation to this Work; but it is by the Word of God only, that a True, a Thorough, a Lasting, and a Saving Reproof is wrought in the Soul: Natural Conscience being able to convince but of few Sins, and upon very weak and uneffectual Motives and Considerations. But it is from the Law of God, that we have the Knowledge of Sin (saith the Apostle, *Rom. 3. 20. 5. 20. 7. 7.*) that is, a clear, an effectual Knowledge and Sense of its Nature, Guilt, and Power, and of the Curse and Punishments attending it; and it is the Handwriting of God upon the Conscience which makes the Heart to ake, and the Joints to tremble. *I will reprove thee* (says God, *Psal. 50. 21.*) *and set thy Sins in order before thine Eyes*: And when God brings the Sinner to his pure and perfect Law, and sets his Sins in Array before him, how full, how powerful, how irresistible must the Conviction be.

(3.)

(3.) God by his Word brings the Soul to a serious *Consideration*; the first necessary Work to be perform'd; most Men perishing for want of it, through a light desultory Vanity, or a profound Negligence, and Ignorance of the Things of God, and the State of their own Souls. But God by his Spirit and his Word, fixes the vain flitting Mind, makes Sinners to be wise, to understand, and *consider* the Things which belong to them; and he sets their Sins always before them, (*Psal.* 50. 21. 51. 3.) so that by their continual Presence, they are necessitated to behold them; and at last brought to *consider* them.

(4.) From this Consideration, the Soul is brought to what is strictly and properly a *Reproof*, and that is, to a *Knowledge*, or Persuasion contrary to what it had formerly; arising from a Conclusion contrary to what it had formerly made; in which consists the Form, or Nature of an *Elenchus* or *Conviction*; which (according to the Philosopher) is a Syllogism with a Conclusion contradictory to a former. Thus St. Paul (*Rom.* 7. 9.) who before his Conversion had concluded that he was in a State of Life or Salvation; when the Commandment came attended with the powerful Efficacy of the Spirit, made a contrary Conclusion, and had a Conviction contrary to the former; *viz.* that he was not alive, but dead in Trespasses and Sins.

(5.) True Conviction is not a bare *Knowledge*, but includes also in it a *Sense* of Sin; it is not a bare Conclusion inferred from premises, only by Way of Ratiocination, in which the Sinner hath no further Concern; but it is a *sensible Conviction*, in which the *Heart*, that is, the Conscience, the Will and Affections, the practical Powers of the Soul are engaged; as well as the Understanding, and Contemplative ones. For,

(6.) The *whole Soul* is engaged, and concerned in Conviction: The Understanding by its Act of Knowledge and Consideration; the Conscience in the Application of the Conclusion to its particular Case; the Affections by Acts of Fear, Grief, Humiliation, and the like; and the Will by Resolutions of Amendment. Thus the Converts upon St. *Peter's* Sermon (*Acts* 2. 37.) were pricked in the Heart, and said, what shall we do to be saved? And those who were convinced by the Prophets (*1 Cor.* 14. 24, 25.) and had the Secrets of their Hearts made manifest, fell down on their Faces, and worshipped God. St. *Peter* went out and wept bitterly. *David's* Repentance upon his Reproof by the Prophet *Nathan*, was extraordinarily solemn and exemplary; and the Penitent *Corinthian* was almost swallowed up with overmuch Sorrow. For the Effects of a sense of Sin are various; according to the Variety of Mens Constitutions, and of the Impressions made upon the Soul; and are much to be observed in our selves,
and

and from the Experiences of others; that so the Effects of Constitution and Indisposition may be distinguish'd from those of God's Reproof; and least through Ignorance of the Nature of them, the Reproof may be stifled in its Birth, sunk into Melancholy, or heightned into Distracted, and Despair: For as the Sinner is to be brought to a godly Fear, and a godly Sorrow; so is he to be kept off, and deliver'd from overmuch Sorrow, and from such a Fear as causeth Torment. But especially great Care is to be taken, that the Will, the principal and commanding Power of the Soul, be drawn off from the Love of Sin, and the Creature, the condemning Act; to the Love of God, the perfecting, and first rewardable Act of the Soul; lest the Conviction become Temporary, and the good Seed endure but for a while for want of Root (*Matth. 13. 21.*) For there is spiritual Life in God's Word; and when there is spiritual Life in those which hear, or read it; there is such an Agreeableness and Connaturality betwixt those two spiritual Powers, that they will unite, and become the Seed of immortal Life to the Soul; upon its receiving, retaining, and operating with it.

(Lastly,) In the foresaid Description are contained the Things of which the Sinner is convinced; which are in general, the *Evil of Sin*, and his own *Miserable State* by reason of it: Which the Spirit by the Word performs; by laying before him the desperate
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Madness, the wretched Folly, the Unprofitableness, the Shame, the Drudgery, the Slavery of Sin: Its Vanity and Vexation, and its utter Disagreeableness to the whole Frame of the rational Nature; which is so miserably disorder'd by it, that the most hardened Sinner cannot but sometimes complain; and all must needs confess, that Sin is contrary to the right Constitution of Nature, because it depresses the upper Faculties of the Soul, the Understanding and Will; and advances the Lower, Sense, Imagination, and sensitive Appetite, into their places; changing the Nature of Man, and transforming him into a Brute. By these, and many other Motives taken from the manifold *Evil Effects* of Sin; as its Stain; its Guilt; the Mischief it brings upon the Body, Soul, Estates, and Reputation of Men, and the Horror it leaves upon the Conscience; doth God's Spirit strive with Sinners: Setting their Sins, and the dreadful Consequences of them, in order before them; the Temporal Punishments, which they already feel; and those Eternal ones, which they have just Cause to Fear, and of which they sometimes have a foretast. Of which Spiritual Conviction, St. *Augustine* is a remarkable Instance, who hath recorded in his *Confessions* the many Warnings he had from God, by his own Sickness, the Death of his Companions in Wickedness, the over-ruling Providences of God, the in-ward

ward Motions and Convictions of his Conscience; and at last by a Voice from Heaven.

But God is sometimes pleased to afford a Sinner a sharp, and mighty Reproof of another Nature, by powerfully opening unto him, and impressing upon him, the *intrinsic* Malignity, or Evil of Sin in it self, as well as its Evil *Effects*, that so the Justice of God in his denunciation against Sin might be the more illustriously manifested, and that Sin might be the more heartily detested, and avoided by him. This Malignity lies deeply hid under the Ruins of fall'n Nature; and there is need of sharp Corrosives and cutting Reproofs to come to the bottom of it. And it is in short this: That by Sin we are departed from God; have cast off his Authority; are at Enmity with him, and in a State of Rebellion against him; that we have actually deposed him, and set up another God in our Hearts, our Selves, and the Creature for our Selves, the great Idol of the World; nay, that Sin containeth in it, the very Malignity of *Atheism* it self, as being a practical Denial of God, a living as without him, as well as in Contrariety to him in the World; and that our corrupt Nature, as such, is of the Devil, or *Diabolical*, see *John* 8. 44. *Eph.* 2. 2. 1 *John* 3. 8, 10. *James* 3. 15. 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. I shall in my next endeavour to place this great Truth in as plain a Light as I can.

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SERMON X.

Of the Intrinfecal Malignity of Sin, and
the Conviction thereof.

P S A L. L. 21.

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a One as thy self: but I will reprove thee, and set them in Order before thine Eyes.



THESE are the Words of God to the Wicked; in which He Threatens to speak more immediately by himself to their Consciences, and to set their Sins *in Order* before them, that so they might be effectually reprov'd and convinced of the Evil and Mischief of them, by his own Way and Manner of Conviction. Which I shall endeavour to lay before you, and open unto you out of Scripture, the only infallible Rule we have to guide us in such Matters: According to which there is a Twofold Reproof of a Sinner by God.

First,

First, A Reproof and Conviction of the Evil *Effects* of Sin; which have been touched on before.

Secondly, Of the Evil of Sin *in it Self*, or the *Intrinsecal* Malignity of it. To which I proceed.

This *Malignity* is Fourfold.

1st, Sin is *Practical Atheism*; because it is a *Denial* of God *in Works*, as the Apostle speaks most accurately (*Tit. 1. 16.*) or a doing that which implies, and will be interpreted by God as a *not knowing* of Him, which is *Privative Atheism*; and as a *Denial* of him, which is *Positive Atheism*. As may appear from these Three following Considerations :

(1.) Every Sin implies in it a Want of a due Knowledge, and Consideration of God, as the perfect supream Good; by which it comes to pass, that the Will chooses an inferior Good instead of the *Supream* or *Chief* Good; which it would not have done, if the Understanding had not been some Way or other wanting in its Office; it being *Natural* to the *Will* to choose what *appears* to it to be *Best*. For who would choose an Imperfect Temporary Good, before a Perfect and Eternal One; the World, or the Flesh, before God? that is, who would sin if he *knew* and considered God as he ought to do?

(2^{dly},) We must consider that a Sinner when engaged in a Course of Sin lives like
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an Atheist, or as without God in the World, as the Apostle's Phrase is (*Eph. 2. 12.*) as one who knows not God to be the supreme Maker, and the Holy and Righteous Governour and Judge of all; he goes on carelessly, and securely in his own Ways, without taking any Notice of God, and of his own Dependence on him. God is not in all his Thoughts, and his Judgments are far above out of his sight, as the Psalmist speaks (*Psal. 10. 4, 5.*) and if he be put in Mind of Him, he sometimes says within himself, with *Pharaoh*, Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him? *Exod. 5. 2.*

(3dly,) Sin is Atheism, as by its Contrariety to God's Laws, it is a practical Denial of those Holy Attributes and Perfections of Wisdom and Goodness, from which his Laws are derived; and of his Power, Truth, Promises, and Threatnings, by which they are established and enforced. It is a Denial *in Works* of his Wisdom, a living as those who thought that he knew not how to make such Laws as were fit for Man to obey; of his Holiness, and Goodness, as if there were something in his Laws which were Evil, and which consequently ought to be disobey'd by him; and of his Power, Truth, Rewards, and Punishments; as if there were no such, or as if he neither would nor could perform what he had promised, nor inflict what he had threatned.

Thus

Thus are all Sinners *Atheists*, as they have not God in their Thoughts, and as they do those things which imply a Denial of him. As Princes and Magistrates do, and in all Justice may, interpret a disregard of themselves, and a disobedience to their Commands, as a Kind of a Denial of them as to those Relations; although perhaps those who were thus Guilty, had never deny'd them in Word, or Thought: For Actions speak as well as Words; and there is the Language of the Life and Conversation, as well as of the Heart and Mouth.

But, Secondly, Sin is *Rebellion*; as it is a Resistance of God, the Supream Governor of the World, and of his Holy Spirit striving with us to draw us off from Sin, unto himself; as it breaks the Rank and Condition of Subjects, in which God hath placed us in the World, which is his Kingdom; and carries with it an actual Contempt, and Opposition to his Authority and Laws; which is in the strictest Propriety *Rebellion*; or the not being subject unto, but resisting the higher Power, the highest, Supream Power, the Fountain and Original of it. Upon which account *Samuel* (1 *Sam.* 15. 23.) calls King *Saul's* Sin, or Disobedience to God, *Rebellion*, and such a Rebellion that is as *Witchcraft* (which is a Work of the Devil) and *Idolatry*.

For

For, Thirdly, Sin is *Idolatry*, and that upon two Accounts: (1.) As it implies a not Having, or Owning of the *True* God. And (2.) As it is a having of other Gods; which is flat positive Idolatry, according to the first and great Commandment, *Thou shalt have no other Gods but me.*

(1.) To *have* or own God is, 1. To *esteem* him with our *Understandings*, as a Being of infinite Perfections, to be esteem'd and valued above, and beyond all other Beings whatsoever. 2. To Love and cleave unto him with our *Wills* and *Affections*, as the *Supream Good*, as *Goodness it self*; as well as Good to others, and to our selves. And 3. To own him in our Lives, by a general *Subjection* of our whole Selves unto him; and a consequent *Obedience* resulting from that general Subjection paid unto him, as our Paternal Governor, and reconciled Father, in and through Christ; whose Laws are most Wise, Just, and Good, and who hath a Right to our utmost Love and Service; which is the positive Duty imply'd in the First Commandment, taken in a Spiritual Gospel sense. But now, on the contrary, the Sinner doth not take God for his God, for his chief Good, and Ultimate End; but declares by the Language of his Actions (which speak as well as Words) that he will not have God to rule over him; which at God's Bar, and before the Tribunal of Heaven, are as so many
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Overt-Acts, proving his Idolatrous Treason against God. But,

(2.) He is perswaded that Sin is *Idolatry*, as it is a *having of other Gods*; a making Idols of our selves, and of the Creatures; a Worshipping, and Serving of them, instead of the True God, from whom we had departed, by Sin disowned and rejected; and a placing of them in his stead in our Hearts, that Throne of Supream Government, which belongs to God alone. Which the Sinner doth many Ways. As,

1st, By taking the Creature for his *Happiness*; for that which he rests satisfied in, and would be contented with for ever, if he could, without looking further for any other, or higher Felicity.

2^{dly}, By esteeming, loving, and enjoying the Creature *for it self*, and not as it is a *Means* to God, our chief End: A Means, by the holy Contempt of which, when it is opposite to God, or put in Competition with him; and by the Holy Use of which, as it is subservient to him, we are brought to him, as our Ultimate End, and therefore the final Object of our Love. For such ought God to be, and he alone: And therefore,

(3^{dly},) The Sinner is an Idolater, as he makes Himself his chief, ultimate End; for he loves the Creature but as a lower, subordinate End: But *Self* is that which is first

130 *Of the Intrinsic Malignity* Serm. 10.
in his Intention, the *prime* Motive to all his
Actions; and the *last* Thing in which all his
Actions, Thoughts and Desires concenter,
and terminate, as in their ultimate, and
most beloved Center of Rest.

(4thly,) The Sinner makes himself an Idol,
by usurping those Perfections, and Rights
which belong to God alone. God, by virtue
of Creation, Preservation, and Redemption,
hath the alone Propriety of us, and of the
Creature, and the sole supream Right of giv-
ing Laws to Mankind, and Governing them:
But Man by Sin usurps this Propriety, and
Government; he lives as if he were his Own,
and as if he might do what he pleased with
himself, and with the Creature; he takes the
Government of himself into his own Hands;
and lives according to Laws of his own mak-
ing; whereby he becomes guilty of *Practi-
cal Idolatry*; by acting as if he took himself
to be a Self-sufficient, independent Being;
such a one as hath Wisdom, and Power e-
nough, as well as Right, to dispose of, and
govern himself, and the Creatures for him-
self, and according to his own Will (*Job* 31.
24. *Isa.* 10. 13. *Habak.* 1. 16. *Psal.* 52. 7.
Rom. 16. 18.)

(5thly,) The Sinner makes an Idol of the
World, and of the Creature; as he lives in
it, and enjoys it, as if it were a Being sepa-
rate from God, independent on him, and his
Will

Will and Pleasure, without duly considering the Divine Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness; the Footsteps and Image of God impressed on the Creature; without considering that in him we live, and move, and have our Being; that of him, and from him, and to him are all Things; and without having a due regard to the utter Insufficiency, nay, Nothingness of the Creature of it self, and as separate from God, conserving, and upholding it; in which sense it is indeed Nothing; it not being possible that a Creature should be independent on its Creator; upon which account *Idols* are said to be *No-thing* in Scripture.

The Malignity of Idolatry cleaves to all Sin, more or less: For Covetousness, the Scripture tells us, is Idolatry (*Eph. 5. 5. Col. 3. 5.*) and some Men make their Belly their God, saith the Apostle (*Phil. 3. 19.*) whilst others, according to the Prophet *Habakkuk* (*Ch. 1. 16*) Sacrifice to their own Net, and burn Incense unto their own Drag; that is, attribute all to their own Power, or Policy; and all Men too too much seek their own, and not the things which are Gods, (*Phil. 2. 21.*) placing that Love, Delight, Confidence, and trust in themselves, and the Creature, which is due to God alone, and serving them more, and rather than the Creator, which is Idolatry.

But this Malignity is most discernible in the first Sin, the Apostacy of our first Parents; for, 1. They affected to be as Gods, particularly in respect of Knowledge, and Immortality: For this was what the Devil tempted them unto; and upon the Hopes, and Expectation of which, they transgressed the Command of God; for God doth know (saith Satan, the Old Serpent, *Gen. 3. 5.*) that in the Day ye eat thereof, your Eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil. 2. They expected this Godlike Independency, Knowledge, and Immortality, from the Creature: Their Knowledge they expected from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil; and their Immortality from the Tree of Life; by the eating of which, they had Hopes of living for ever; as appears from *Gen. 3. 22.* where the Holy Spirit speaking in the Language of Men, in Condescension to the most vulgar Capacities, does, by Way of a Holy Scoff, or Divine Irony, upbraid these their credulous, vain Expectations. And the Lord God said, Behold the Man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil; and now, lest he put forth his Hand, and take also of the Tree of Life and eat, and live for ever: Which is a Holy derision of their aforesaid vain Hopes.

From all which it seemsto be evident, that the first Sin was *Idolatry*: For they would have been *as Gods*; that is, they would not have

have depended upon God, as Children upon their Parents, for continual Allotments of Being and Knowledge; but would have both independently in their own Power, and in their own Possession; They would eat of the Tree of Knowledge, and thereby have it within themselves, as in its Source, and Fountain; and they would eat of the Tree of Life and live for ever, independently on God, who gave them their Being; and who only was able to preserve it, by a continued Creation. And what is this but Idolatry, to set up themselves in God's stead, and to usurp in *Desire* and *Hope* his essential Perfections? A fearful, but a foolish Apostacy, which would not be so easily believed as it is, if daily Experience did not shew us that Men are commonly guilty of the same Folly, making Idols of themselves, of their Power, and their Riches, by placing their Hope, and their Confidence in them (*Job. 31. 24.*) and by saying with the arrogant *Assyrian* (*Isa. 10. 13*) by the Strength of *my* Hand *I* have done it, and by *my* Wisdom, for *I am* prudent. And the like foolish Idolatry is there in every Sin, which is a Departure from God to the Creature, in Esteem, Love, and Practice, to our selves as the chief Idol; and to the World, the Profits, Honours, and Pleasures of it, as they administer to our selfish Wills and Affections.

(*Lastly,*) Sin is not only Atheism, Rebellion against God, and Idolatry, but it is (if I may so speak) *Diabolicism* too; it is not only earthly and sensual, but *devilish*. For Sin, as the Scripture assures us, owes its first Original to the Devil; and he is the Spirit that still worketh in the Children of Disobedience, who are thereupon like him, and partake of his Nature; he is their Father, and they his Children; and in the Account of God and Scripture, as much as we have of Sin in us, so much have we of the Nature and Image of the Devil; for as that which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit; so *that which is born of the Devil, is Devil*; as I hope I may speak with Reverence, and without Offence, in Agreeableness to Scripture Expressions. And now, what a monstrous Thing is Sin! what a monstrous Creature is a Sinner!

This is that Conviction, which lays the Ax to the Root of the Tree of Evil; and which will most effectually perswade Men of the Reasonableness and Justice of those Punishments which God hath denounced against Sinners. For if Sin be Atheism, Rebellion, Idolatry, and a Work of the Devil, (as it certainly is, Scripture being Judge, and even Reason it self proceeding according to Scripture) what wonder is it that it is so severely threatned, and that it is attended
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by God in Scripture, with such dismal Consequences and Effects, Bodily and Spiritual, Temporal and Eternal?

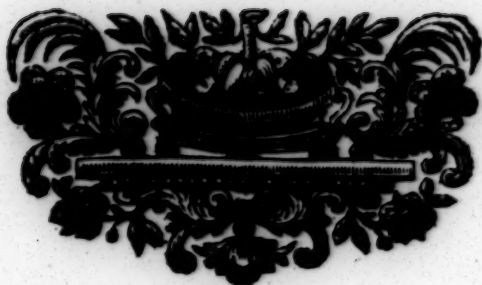
THUS, O God, hast thou reproved Man in thy Word; and thus, O God, dost thou sometimes convince Men by thy Spirit; and thus, O God, do thou reprove all of us, for all of us being Sinners, have mere or less need of this Reproof; that so we may be fully perswaded, and experimentally know, that the Comforter is come unto us, and the World may be more effectually reprov'd and convinced of Sin, by the Exemplariness of our Spiritual Gifts and Graces, the Earnests and Foretastes of our future Happiness with thee.

But this, O Lord, is the Work of thy Spirit; to that we must leave it; which although it bloweth where it listeth, yet is never wanting to any one who sincerely desireth it, and earnestly prayeth for it, and maketh due Use of it when it is given him. We may Plant and Water, (nay, *must* do it, for it is our Duty, when we have Ability and Opportunity for it) but it is thou that givest the Encrease; and thou dost never deny some Measure of it, some Growth, or Root, some new Encrease in Grace, or some Strength, Establishment, and Comfort to what we have, if we be not wanting in our selves. If Men indeed sit under the Ministry of Christ (one Part of which is Preaching, an Ordinance

nance of Gospel-Institution) unconcernedly, and not with due Attention; but come to Church in Expectation of some pleasing, delightful Entertainment, and not of solid Truth, Scriptural Instruction, and Conviction of Conscience; it is no wonder, if they return home with Souls untouched and unmoved by God's Spirit, and not a whit better, although perhaps in some Things wiser than they came. And if they come with Minds wholly ignorant of, or not sufficiently instructed in Gospel-Truths, and have not been accusom'd to read or hear the Scriptures; it is again no wonder, that they do not profit by spiritual Gospel-preaching, and if the Preacher seemeth as a Barbarian unto them. But where these Preparatories are nor wanting, I do no ways doubt, but that the Gospel, even in the Hands of us weak Instruments, will make its Way to Mens Souls, and convey some Beams of Light and Life to them: For the Gospel is the only appointed Means of Salvation, and there is no other Word, but the good Word of God, which is the Word of Eternal Life to Christians.

May God by his Spirit make it effectual unto all of us, to Preachers as well as Hearers; that so we, when we have preached to others, may not our selves become Cast-aways; but may save our selves, and
 them

them that hear us; and none of us, neither Pastors nor People, may awake at last to Shame and Everlasting Contempt, but to Everlasting Life; and both they who turn others to Righteousness, and they who are turned to it, may shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever.



SERMON



SERMON XI.

Of Repentance. A Sense of Sin.

A C T S III. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that
your Sins may be blotted out.*

A C T S XXVI. 20.

*That they should Repent, and turn to God,
and do Works meet for Repentance.*



IF the Corruption of our Natures, the Impetuoufness and Violence of our Passions, the Difficulty and Severity of God's Laws, and our Inability to keep them, were more seriously consider'd; the Duty and Grace of Repentance would be more frequently insisted on, more earnestly pray'd for, and pursued in our Lives and Conversations. For can that Duty be too often enforced, too early begun, or too soon finished; upon the Performance of which our *Eternal Welfare* depends? Can we be too eagerly engaged in

in that Spiritual Warfare, in which we have many Enemies to conquer, and but small Force to obtain the Victory? Can we be too often encouraged to that Fight, in which we are to engage, not only with Flesh and Blood, (*Eph. 6. 12.*) but with Principalities and Powers, with the Rulers of the Darknes of this World, and with spiritual Wickednesses in high Places? that is, with the Devil, his evil Angels, and the powerful Corruptions of our own selfish and perverse Wills and Affections. In which we are to war, not weakly, and after the Flesh, but are to be *mighty through God*, (*2 Cor. 10. 3, 4, 5.*) to the pulling down of strong Holds; to the casting down of Imaginations, and bringing into Captivity *every Thought* to the Obedience of Christ. Can we be too often admonished to put on the *Armour of God*, when we have such Enemies to encounter? when we are to resist and subdue the *Dominion* of Original Corruption, that Inclination to Evil which was born and bred with us, and is radicated in the very Constitution of our Natures; when we are to efface those *Notions* with which in our first Years, Sense had anticipated our Reason; when we are to thwart and govern those *Passions* which Nature has implanted, Temperament has cherished, Custom and Habit have made almost necessary unto us; when we are to take up the *Cross* of Christ, to put out

out our right Eye; to deny, (*Luk. 14. 26.*) whatsoever is most near and dear to us, even our Fathers and Mothers, when they stand in Competition with God; and to live in a perpetual Violence to our corrupt Natures, and in a kind of a Domestick War with our selves, by thwarting our most passionate Inclinations, and most importunate Desires. Can that Duty be accounted easy, which has so *great* a Task to perform; or ought that to be deferred, which is of so *important* a Consequence? Can we think that the faint Strugglings of a Death-bed Repentance, are able to grapple with the Strength of those Temptations, which require perfect Vigour, and the full Man, and in which we are not to be weary and faint in our Minds, but are to strive against Sin, and resist *even to Blood*, (*Hebr. 12. 3, 4.*) when God calls us to it? For our due Instruction in the performance of which weighty Duty, the Neglect or Contempt of which will prove of all others the most fatal, I shall, from the first Words of the Text, *Repent ye therefore* (referring the latter to some other Opportunity) discourse on these Things: I shall endeavour to shew,

1. Wherein the Nature and Formality of Repentance consists.

2. What are the Causes of, and Preparatives to Repentance.

3. What are the subsequent Acts and Affections of Repentance. Under which three Par-

Particulars, I conceive, the whole Latitude of Repentance may be comprehended.

And (1st,) The very *Essence* and *Nature* of Repentance consists in a thorough Change of Mind; in being turned (*Acts* 26. 18, 20.) from Darkness unto Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; in a constant, persevering State of forsaking Evil, and doing Good.

So that the (Essential) constituent Parts of Repentance are nothing else but the Parts of *Evangelical Obedience* to the Commandments of God; Abstinence from Evil, and Perseverance in Good; a Repentance not only *for*, but *from* Dead Works, *Heb.* 6. 1.

And that this is the Scripture Notion of Repentance, is evident from the 26th of the *Acts* and the 20th Verse, where St. *Paul*, relating the manner of his Conversion, and his Obedience to the Heavenly Vision, tells us, that the Subject of his Commission of Preaching to the Gentiles was, that they should *repent*, and turn to God, and do *meet Works of Repentance*; that they should amend their former evil Lives, and bring forth fruits worthy of the Gospel of Christ; which in the Verse foregoing is expressed by *opening their Eyes*, and turning them *from Darkness to Light*. Agreeably whereto the Hebrew Word *שׁוּב*, which in the Original signifies to *turn*, is by our Translators rendred, *Repent* (*Ezek.* 18. 30.) *Repent*, and turn from all your
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Transgressions. And in *Solomon's* Prayer, at the Dedication of the Temple, (1 *Kings* 8. 33, 34 Verses) the Duty of a repenting People is express'd by turning *to* God, and turning *from* Sin.

According to which Scripture Notion, Repentance is said (1.) by *Tertullian*, to consist, *Non in Delicti confessione, sed in Animi demutatione*; not so much in Confession of Sin, as in a change of Mind. Where by the way we may take notice, how far those of the *Romish* Persuasion have swerved from the Scripture, who, in their Disputes and Determinations concerning Repentance, have placed it in a severe Discipline and Austerity towards the Flesh, with scarce any, or but little mention of renewing the Mind; in a Bodily *Exercise*, which of it self profiteth little except it be accompanied with Godliness and Reformation of Life, which are profitable unto all Things, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8.

Having thus (for our more regular proceeding) settled the true Notion of Repentance (referring its fuller Consideration to some following Particulars) I shall descend to the second Thing proposed, and shew what are the *Causes* of, and *Preparatives* to Repentance; which are Two.

1. Sense of Sin.

2. Sorrow for Sin. For the Essence of Repentance consisting in a Change of Mind, in a dying to Sin, and living to Righteousness,

ness, Godly Sorrow cannot be a constituent part of it, but is rather a *Preparative* to the particular Grace, and a perpetual Concomitant of the State of Repentance: Especially seeing that Godly Sorrow is by the Apostle 2 (*Cor.* 7. 10.) said to *work* Repentance to Salvation; and it cannot be both the antecedent Cause, and the constituent Part too.

But to be more particular, Repentance signifies *precisely*, as it is distinguish'd from *Conversion*, the turning of the Heart *from* Sin; and *Conversion*, the turning of the Heart *to* God. But Repentance in its general Notion includes in it these three Things.

1. A Sense of Sin.
2. Sorrow for Sin.
3. Effectual Resolutions of Amendment, or actual Turning from Sin.

1. A *Sense of Sin*: By which I mean such a serious Consideration, and sincere Conviction of the *Odiousness* and *Danger* of Sin, as humbles the Sinner in the Sense of it; and leads him to Sorrow and Contrition for it.

Sin is attended with so many mischievous Consequences (which are as so many natural Sanctions of God's Laws, and necessary Punishments for the breach of them) that even natural Conscience, and Reason, if duly attended to, may go far to work a Sense of Sin in the Wicked. Common Sense, Reason and Experience teach us, that Sensuality im-
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pairs our Health and our Reason, and debases us below the Rank and Dignity of rational Creatures; that the Ways of Virtue are Ways of Pleasantness; that the Paths of Vice lead to Shame and Destruction; and that it is folly to hazard the being miserable for *ever* (altho' there were but bare *probable* Grounds for it) for the Enjoyment of a few Years of Pleasure, frequently interrupted, and always mixt and allay'd with a much greater Proportion of Dissatisfaction, Trouble, and Misery. But alas, of what small Efficacy are the Motives from Reason, to those which the Scripture, and the Spirit of God, by its inward Convictions affords us? For of how few Sins, in comparison, can Reason convince us, and upon what slight Motives? How ineffectual are those which are taken from the Consideration of the Temporal Sanction or Threatened Punishments, by which God has enforc'd the Laws of Nature; and hath made Virtue its own Reward, and Vice its own Punishment; How ineffectual are they to the Gospel Denunciations of eternal Happiness, or eternal Misery; and to the Convictions of Conscience from the more immediate impressions of Divine Vengeance, that Hand-writing of God upon the Wall, which will make the Heart ake, and the Joints tremble. When a Sinner, loaden with the weight of Iniquity, reflects upon his former Life, examines it according to God's Commandments,
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and weighs his Actions in the Balance of the Sanctuary; when in the Bitterness of his Soul he considers the dreadful Consequences of this State of Sin; and his Conscience gives him a View of the Happiness he has forfeited, and a Taste of the Torments he is to suffer; there must needs arise in his Mind, upon such Considerations, a *deep* Sense of the *Danger* of Sin, which will be much encreased by due Consideration of, or Reflection upon, the *Intrinsic Evils* of Sin in its own Nature, and the odiousness of it in the Sight of God; who, by reason of his Essential Holiness, Justice and Goodness, is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. For Sin includes in it a Contempt of God, who hath forbidden it by his Laws; and of his Holy Attributes, and Perfections, from which his Laws are deriv'd, and by which they are enforc'd and establish'd; it slight's God's Authority over us; and by it (as being a governing Act of our own Self-will, according to Laws and Rules of our *own* making) we usurp that Government of our selves, which God alone, as our Creator, Governor, and Benefactor, can justly challenge over us. Sin is a contempt of Virtue, and of the eternal Rules of Good and Evil; a Breach of the Order which Providence hath settled in the World; an Affront to Reason, and the rational Nature, which it degrades by preferring Sense, and sensual Appetite, and the
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brutal Nature before it. It is a deform'd monstrous Birth of the Human Nature, sunk into the Bestial; a foolish preferring of the corruptible Body, before the immortal Soul; and a few Moments of Time continually passing away, before the permanent, endless Duration of Eternity. By such like Considerations, an effectual saving Sense of Sin is best wrought in the Soul of a Sinner; but yet it is most commonly produced by *Fear of Punishment*; which is a good, but imperfect Motive to Repentance. For the Apostle perswades Men because of the *Terrors* of the Lord.

Let no Man then rashly censure that Repentance which arises from a serious Conviction of the danger of Sin, and the fear of Punishment, as if it were only servile, and, as some use to speak, only the Effect of a Legal Spirit; for although that Obedience, which proceeds from a Principle of *Love*, be more perfect, yet certainly that Godly Sorrow, which arises from a Fear of Punishment, is a good (although imperfect) beginning of True Repentance, and will, if not neglected, be improved into an Obedience founded upon Love. For is Fear of Hell Torments only a Legal Motive; or doth not the Gospel contain as severe Sanctions, or Threats of Punishment against impenitent Sinners as the Law doth? Does not the Apostle (2 Cor. 5. 11.) perswade Men, be-

because of the *Terrors of the Lord*; and are not future Torments a strong Motive to drive us from the Wrath to come? Is not *Fear* the Beginning of Wisdom? Was not *Noah's* Faith moved by *Fear*, when he prepared an Ark, and was he not for so doing accounted an Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith? (*Hebr. 11. 7.*) I do not say that every repenting Sinner must pass through the *Terrors of the Law*, before he can be capable of the Mercies of the *Gospel*. Because I take that Assertion to be grounded upon a plain Mistake of the Nature of the Gospel; whose Commands are enforced with as severe Penalties against *finally impenitent* Sinners as those of the Law, take it in what Sense you please; and denounces against *Infidelity* far heavier Judgments than any of those which were accompanied with Thundrings and Lightnings from Mount Sinai. *For if he who despised Moses Law died without Mercy, of how much sorer Punishment shall he be thought worthy, who accounteth the Blood of the Covenant of Grace an unholy thing?* *Hebr. 10. 28, 29.*

Now although it be not necessary, that every repenting Sinner, before his Conversion, should pass through all the amazing Terrors of the Law, and have felt the dreadful Sting of Conscience even to *Despair* (for without doubt many Sinners have been wrought upon by more generous Motives) yet we had

by Experience, that the generality of Men are commonly moved to repent by a serious Consideration of the Justice of God, the Terror of his Laws, and Eternal Torments in the World to come. And we are sure that every sincere Penitent ought to be afraid of God's Justice; and work out his own Salvation with *fear* and *trembling*: And that there is not a more powerful Motive to excite Men to Virtue, and deter them from Vice, than a constant Meditation upon the Joys of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell. For could we have but a View of those Millions and Millions of Angels which are singing Hallelujahs about God's Throne; could we but see (as *Isaiab* did) the Lord sitting upon a Throne high and lifted up, and hear the Seraphims cry one to another, *Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory*; Isa. 6. 1, 3. Were but Heaven open to the View of this Congregation, could we but see the Glory of God, and Jesus Christ standing at his right Hand interceeding for us; what Joy, what Admiration, what Extasies would it excite in all our Hearts; how would such a Sight ravish our Affections, kindle our Desires, entertain, nay, swallow up all the Faculties of our Souls?

And were but, on the other side, the Torments of Hell exposed to the View of a Sinner, could he have but a Sight of that Lake of Burnings, could he but once hear the
dread-

dreadful Complaints and Groans of the Damned; and be made but the least sensible of the inward Torments, which fully possess their Spirits; how would such a Scene of Horror work upon him? how would he strive to the utmost to avoid Pains so unsufferable, Punishments so irreversible?

O that Men therefore would consider the Danger of a State of Sin; that they would have a true Sense of its fatal Consequences; that they would consider what it is to be hated of God, good Men, and even of their own Souls; what it is to go on in Sin against the Mercy and Patience of God, and in despite of his Justice and Threatnings; what it is to be un sanctified and unjustified; to be an Heir of Death and Hell; and to be eternally given up to the Power, and unspeakable Misery of Self-Conviction, Horror, and Despair. Why therefore do we foolish Men and unwise thus provoke the Lord to Jealousy? Are we stronger than he? Can we endure devouring Fire, or can we indeed dwell with everlasting Burnings?

Let then the Long-suffering of God lead us to Repentance, lest we treasure up more Wrath to our selves; and by all the remainings Acts of Repentance, *Godly Sorrow*, and *Resolutions of Amendment*, let us Work out our Salvation so effectually here, as that we may be happy with God to all Eternity hereafter.

SERMON XII.

Of Godly Sorrow, and Contrition.

A C T S III. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that
your Sins may be blotted out.*



Have begun to shew you from these Words what Repentance is, and that it consisteth in these *three* Things.

First, In a Sense of Sin.

Secondly, In a Sorrow for Sin.

Thirdly, In effectual Resolutions of Amendment.

By a Sense of Sin, as I have already shewn you, is meant in Scripture such a serious Consideration, and sincere Conviction of the Odiousness and Danger of Sin, as humbles the Sinner in the Sense of it, and leads him to Sorrow, and Contrition for it.

I proceed now to the Second Particular, to wit, *Sorrow for Sin*; which the Scripture calls *Contrition* (Pal. 51. 17. and *godly Sorrow*,

row, 2 Cor. 7. 10.) and being made Sorrow after a godly manner, and sorrowing after a godly sort, in the foregoing and following Verse, where it is described more fully by the Apostle from its Effects.

By *godly Sorrow*, the Scriptures mean a Sorrow agreeable to God's Will, and wrought by his Spirit; and which breaks forth into Affections suitable to it. It arises usually from Fear, proceeds to Displeasure, Shame, Grief, Hatred, Zeal, and Revenge against Sin, and all the other afflicting Passions of the Mind; by which a Penitent testifies that he repents, or dislikes, and is displeased at what he has done, and that it grieves him at the very Heart; as the Scripture (*Gen. 6. 6, 7.*) hath described after a very lively manner God's detestation of Sin, in the Language of Men, as the *Jews* speak; and as the Apostle describes the godly Sorrow of the *Corinthians* (2 Cor. 7.) which worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.

Godly Sorrow is such a one as hath the Fear and Love of God as its True Motive; which begins usually in a Fear of Hell Torments, and proceeds from a Love of the Rewards which God hath promised, to a Love of God's Commands, and from thence to a Love of Virtue and Holiness, and of the infinitely amiable Goodness and Nature of the Good and Blessed God. It begins in Affections of Fear, Grief, Hatred, and De-

testation of Sin, and proceeds to work upon the Will, and to produce in it hearty and sincere Resolutions of Amendment. It not only makes Resolutions of Repenting; but at the same time makes Resolutions of using the Means to obtain it: and immediately with hearty Affections, with Grief and Sorrow, and an holy Indignation against Sin, it strives against it, resists it, and at last, by God's Aid and Assistance, overcomes it.

Attrition and *Contrition* are assign'd by the Schools, to be the Essential Parts of Godly Sorrow, the *Second Preparative* to Repentance.

Attrition they define to be a *Terror of Conscience, arising from an Apprehension of God's Wrath, attended with an imperfect purpose of Sinning no more*; which imperfect Degree of Sorrow, and Resolution, according to their Doctrine, may, by the Power of the Keys, in administering the Sacrament of *Penance*, be changed into *Contrition*; which is a *Sorrow of Mind, that we have offended the Goodness of God, joined with a sincere and effectual Resolution of forsaking Sin for the future*. So that, according to this Doctrine of the Schools, ratified by the Council of *Trent*, confirmed by several of their later Doctors, and greedily embraced by all who would purchase Heaven upon cheap and easie Terms; a bare Act of *Attrition*, or Sorrow for fear of Punishment, joined with an imperfect

perfect purpose of not Sinning, is a sufficient Qualification for a Man, to be put into a state of Grace by the Sacrament of Penance. And could the Deceiver of Mankind himself invent a Doctrine, which could more obstruct true Piety, and the Obligations to a Holy Life? And if those Doctrines are to be reputed the most dangerous, which undermine, and overflow and intrench most upon the Obligations to a Holy Life, then certainly there are few of their Errors more to be detested than this is. For who would undergo the severe Discipline of Mortification; who would conform his Life to the strict Precepts of the Gospel; who would fast and pray, and water his Couch with Tears; who would deny himself his darling Lusts, and love God above all Things, if the Sacrament of Penance can free us from the most ^a heavy Yoak of Contrition, and the Love of God; if an imperfect purpose of Amendment, even then when we can sin no more, and a servile Fear of Hell Torments, may by the Priest's Absolution be advanced into a perfect Reformation of Life, and Love to God;

^a Morin. de Pœnitent. Lib. 8. cap. 4. N. 26. *Sacramentorum Evangelicorum supra Legalia Præstantiam & prærogativam in hoc potissimum fulgere, quod Evangelica gravissimo Contritionis & Dilectionis Dei Jugo, nos liberaverint. Concil. Trident. Sess. 14. cap. 4. Et quamvis sine Sacramento Pœnitentiæ, per se ad Justificationem perducere Peccatorem nequeat (attritio scilicet) tamen cum ad Dei Gratiam in Sacramento Pœnitentiæ impetrandam disponet. Scet. L. 4. Dist. 14. Stillingfl. General Preface to his Defence of his Book, concerning the Idolatry of the Church of Rome.*

and

and the fervile Fear of a despairing *Judas*, be changed into the Heavenly Sorrow of a contrite *Peter*?

But alas! howsoever we may flatter ourselves, God will not be mocked; for it is such a Sorrow for Sins past, which is attended with an actual Reformation of Life, which God requires; and the Gospel affords but small Ground for their Salvation, who defer their Repentance to their Death-Beds.

And although true Godly Sorrow does (ordinarily) spring from the *Affections*, yet it must end in the *Will*, and a broken and contrite Heart must be attended with a Renovation of the Mind. Godly Sorrow indeed takes its Original from the Passions, it begins in Fear, proceeds to Grief and Hatred, but must end in a perfect Resolution to forsake Sin; in such a Resolution which at the same time resolves upon the *Means* as well as upon the *End*; that is, resolves not only to leave off the Sin, but also to make use of the Means of conquering and subduing it; for many Men resolve to forsake Sin, but never set about the Means of doing it.

The first step to Godly Sorrow is *Fear*; Fear of Hell Torments, of the Justice and Severity of God, who is a consuming Fire, and will confound all the Workers of Iniquity.

The Second is *Grief*; Grief that we have wilfully drawn upon our selves everlasting Ruine,

Ruine, and have incurred the Displeasure of a Loving Father, a God Merciful and Gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, forgiving Iniquity, Transgressions, and Sin; who hath sworn by his Holiness, that he hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked.

The Third is *Hatred*; Hatred of the Deformity, Turpitude and Loathsomeness of Sin, by which we defile the Temples of the Holy Ghost, and turn the Members of Christ into the Members of an Harlot.

The Fourth and last Act of Contrition, is a *Will to forsake and leave Sin*; without which, all the other Degrees and Steps of Sorrow advance but little; and our flying from the Wrath to come will be but Vain and Useless, except we bring forth meet Fruits of Repentance.

But although the Resolution of the Will gives the last stroak to Contrition, and renders all the foregoing Acts of the Passions effectual, yet these also are to be accounted necessary Parts of Godly Sorrow, and Dispositions to a sincere Repentance. For a true Sense of Sin, will leave so deep an impression of Sorrow upon our Souls, as will command our Affections no less than sway the bent of our Wills. True Godly Sorrow will soften our Passions, and melt them into Tears; it will mollify the most obdurate Heart, and make Waters flow out of the hardest Rock.

When

When Compunction, Grief, and Hatred, those Arrows of the Lord, wound the Penitent Sinner, how will he pant after the Water-Brooks, how will he thirst after the Living God? When all thy Waves, O Lord, pass over him, and the Terrors of Hell encompass him, how will his Heart melt for Fear, and his Eye-lids take no Rest?

I do not say that an outward sensible Expression of Sorrow, is an absolute sign of a sincere Contrition; for true Grief may be *Silent*, whilst a false one is *Clamorous*. And there are some Constitutions, from which the greatest inward Grief can force no outward Expressions, whilst others can weep at a doleful Story, or a Tale well told, and dissolve into Tears upon slight and trivial Occasions.

But although *Tears* are not absolutely necessary to true Contrition, yet certainly they very much commend our Sorrow, and make Grief sit more comely; and Men of those Constitutions, which are apt to weep for Temporal Losses, are very much to doubt the Truth of their Contrition, if they can command no Tears for their Sins.

Holy *David*, although he grieved much for the Sicknefs of his Child, and the Rebellion of his Son, yet he shed not more Tears for sensible Losses than for Spiritual ones; but express'd as much *outward* Grief for his Sins, as for the Death of his beloved

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Abalom. He roared because of the Disquietness of his Heart (*Psalms* 38. 8.) he watered his Couch with Tears, and they were his Meat both Day and Night. St. Peter went out and wept bitterly; yea, Christ himself, the Captain of our Salvation, consecrated Tears upon his Cross; for he offered up Prayers and Supplications with strong Crying and Tears.

And did the Son of God cry with a loud Voice, and shed Tears for our Sins, and can we not afford one Sigh and Tear for our own? Was his Soul nigh unto Death? Did his Body sweat, and as it were weep drops of Blood (*Luk.* 22. 44.) for our sake, and can we not weep, if not for him, yet for our selves, and for our Children, for the Days which are coming, in which, if we repent not, we shall in vain call upon the Mountains to fall on us, and the Hills to cover us. Let us all then passionately wish with Holy *Jeremy* (9. 1.) that our Heads were Waters, and our Eyes a fountain of Tears, that we might weep Day and Night for our Sins, and for the Sins of the People. Let us weep bitterly, and labour not to be comforted (*Isa.* 22. 4.) whilst God is displeased, and our own Souls disquieted. Let us all say with devout St. Austin, *O Domine da Gratiam Lacrymarum*; Give us, O Lord, such a flexible Disposition of Soul, such an humble and contrite Heart, as shall move our Affections, and mollify us into Tears,

Tears, and strike thou this *hard Rock*, that the *Waters* may flow.

It is an *actual Amendment of Life*, which gives us a full Assurance of the sincerity of our Contrition, and the last stroak of the Will which renders the Heart *truly broken and contrite*; This sanctifies all our Passions, and makes all our former Acts of Mortification effectual; without this, our Fear is servile, our Grief unmanly, our Prayers the sacrifice of Fools, and our Fasts send forth a stinking favour before the Lord. For could the Repentance of any People be more solemn than that of the *Jews*, or could any Sorrow be attended with more aggravating Circumstances? There was great Mourning in the midst of the Cities, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in Sackcloth and Ashes, (*Esth.* 4. 1, 3.) They roared like Bears, and mourned like Doves (*Is.* 59. 11.) and yet all these Demonstrations of Grief, were but outward Pomp and Scene of Sorrow, because they were not attended with the inward Contrition of the Heart. For to *Bow down the Head like a Bulrush*, and to *put on Sackcloth and Ashes*, is not the Repentance which the Lord hath chosen; but to loose the Bands of Wickedness, to undo the heavy Burthens, to draw out our Souls to the Hungry, and to satisfy the Afflicted with Bread, *Isa.* 58. 5, 6, 10.

To sum up this Head.

Hath

Hath the sense of Sin, the fear of God's Justice, and of Eternal Torments, so far awaken'd thy secure Soul, as to give thee a View of the Odiousness of Sin, of the dreadful state of an impenitent Sinner; hath this serious Consideration mollify'd thy hard Heart into a Godly Sorrow hath it bred in thee! Hatred, and loathing of Sin; hath this fear proceeded to a noble and generous Grief, for thy having offended the Father who created thee, the Son, who redeemed thee, and the Holy Ghost, who in thy Baptism sanctified thee; hath this Sorrow produced an effectual Purpose of Amendment, and an absolute Dereliction of Sin, then be thou assured, that thy Contrition is perfect, that *Aversion* from Sin (the first part of thy Repentance) is perform'd: Then lift up thy Head with Joy, for thy Redemption draweth nigh, and with an humble *confidence*, a Confidence in the Promises of God, be thou certain (if thou perseverest in well-doing) that that God, who through the Spirit hath thus far enabled thee, to mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, will perfect that Work in thee which he hath begun, and by his sanctifying Grace will renew thee in the whole Man, and will make thee perfect in every good Work to do his Will; that so thou mightest at last enjoy the End of all thy Godly Sorrow and Humiliation, Eternal Happiness.

I have thus dispatch'd the Preparatives to Repentance, a Sense of Sin, and a Sorrow for Sin. Which last includes in it not only the first part of Repentance, *Mortification* or Aversion from Sin, but also the first Degree of *Vivification* or Conversion to God; for the last Act of *Aversion*, which is a Purpose to forsake and leave Sin, is also the first Act of *Conversion*, or of turning to God.

Doth Godly Sorrow work Repentance to Salvation, let us all then seriously endeavour after it, and take all Opportunities to stir and rouse our selves out of that Lethargy of Sin, which has seized upon the Generality of Mankind. The best Way to it, is to obtain a true humble sense of our Selves, by Acts of Consideration and Self-Examination, not only at some solemn Times, or before receiving the Sacrament, or upon our Sick-Beds, but daily. For it was the Advice of a Heathen, not to compose our selves to sleep, before we had examined the Actions of the Day past; and Holy *David* admonishes us to commune with our own Hearts upon our *Beds*, and *be still*. To take advantage of the *Silence* of the Night, when the hurry, and the bustle of the Day is over, to examine calmly, and seriously consider, the Transactions of the Day past.

But alas, I too much fear, that few Christians consider so much as the Wise Heathens used to do; but silence their Consciences

ences with frivolous Pretences, which they cannot but confess, upon sober Consideration, will not stand them instead at the last Day. For few Men are so far oppress'd with hard Labour, or necessary Business, but that they may find every Day some Moments for serious Consideration, which may be very well spared from the Time they spend in Unnecessary, nay, Sinful Diversions. The too much precious Time, which we all spend in impertinent Discourse, in immoderate Eating and Drinking, and in the overmuch Care for this World, might be very well laid out in Thoughts of Eternity, and of our precious and immortal Souls. Have we not all of us been guilty of Sins enough to render us Careful and Considerate? To make us at least Serious and Thoughtful, if we think not fit to have our Hearts so broken and contrite as Holy *David's* was, or to Sorrow after such a Godly sort as the *Corinthians* did: as St. *Peter* did for Denying his Master, and as the Holy Penitents of Old used to do. Alas, Men go now on jollily in these Sins, for which they were wont to weep in Sackcloth and Ashes for whole Years together; and a strong Confidence of being the Children of God in some, a Groundless relying upon the Mercies of Christ in others, and the Thoughts of an Easy and Death-bed Repentance in almost all, has rendred

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godly Sorrow a very slight Thing, and made the straight Gate of the Gospel so wide, that there are few Men, which may not upon those Grounds enter into it. O my beloved Brethren ! a Life which will be rewarded in Heaven, is a more serious, a more strict, a more severe Thing than is generally imagin'd ; and that Looseness of Manners, and Intemperance, that general Neglect which there is of Devotion in Publick, in Private, in the Church, in the Closet, in Families, is inconsistent with that godly Sorrow which worketh Repentance to Salvation. Which must be accompanied, as the Apostle tells us, with Indignation, with Fear, with vehement Desire, with Zeal, with Revenge.

May God work in us all such a godly Sorrow for our Sins, as may end in Repentance here, and in Salvation hereafter.





SERMON XIII.

Of the Subsequent Acts and Affections
of Repentance.

Acts III. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that
your Sins may be blotted out.*



Have undertaken to shew from these Words what Repentance is, in its fullest Latitude; as it comprehends under it not only the *Essence* of the Duty it self, which consists in the Turn of the *Mind* and *Will* from Sin (*Μετανοια*); but also what may be call'd the Causes of, and Preparatives to Repentance; and the subsequent Acts, or Affections, or Adjuncts of it. The Causes of, and Preparatives to Repentance (commonly accounted the Parts of it) I have shewn to be Three:

First, *A Sense of Sin.*

Secondly, *Sorrow for Sin.*

Thirdly, *Resolutions of Amendment.*

By a Sense of Sin is meant in Scripture, as I have already shewn you, such a serious

Consideration, and sincere Conviction of the *Danger* of Sin, as humbles the Sinner in the sense of it, and leads him to Sorrow, and Contrition for it. And not only so, but by it is meant also a deep Consideration and sense of the *Intrinsic Evils* of Sin, *in its own Nature*; and of its Odiousness in the Sight of God, as well as of its *Danger to us*; by which a more high Aversion to Sin will be raised in us, and a Repentance founded upon Love to God, whom we had offended, rather than upon Fear of Danger to our Selves.

For Sin includes in it a Contempt of God, who hath forbidden it by his Laws; and of his holy Attributes and Perfections, from which his Laws are derived, and by which they are enforced, and established; and it not only contemns his Authority, but usurps it too, as it is an Act of our own Self-Wills, taking to our selves that Government of our selves by Laws, and Rules of our own making, which belongs only to God as our Supreme Governor; and is therefore Treason against him. Many, very many more mischievous Evils are included in the Nature of Sin, which when duly consider'd by a pious, conscientious Penitent, whose Soul is touched with some degrees of the Love of God, will by degrees, in the Process of Repentance, work in him a strong sense of, and aversion for Sin, upon the truest Grounds, and Motives; and will bring him to a *True godly Sorrow* for Sin, which hath not only
Fear,

Fear, but *Love* for its Motive ; and proceeds from a Love of the Rewards which God hath promised to a Love of his Holy Commands ; and from thence to a pure Love of Him for Himself, who is Holiness, and Goodness it self ; in which the Perfection of Divine Love consists.

The weakest Degrees of such a godly Sorrow will produce such sincere *Resolutions* of *Amendment*, as at the same Time shall induce the Penitent to Resolve upon the End, and upon the Means of obtaining it ; and in a Holy Grief, Zeal, and Indignation against Sin, shall resist and strive against it to the utmost, and at last, through God's assistance, overcome it ; so that having thus prosperously wrought out his Repentance, that is, his Aversion, or *Turning from Sin*, he shall cheerfully enter upon the great Work of his *Conversion*, or of his *Turning to God*, with such a strong Bent, and Inclination of his *Will* (which is the Commanding Faculty of the Soul, and from which a Man is chiefly denominated) as shall draw the whole Man after it, and enable him to produce Fruits meet for Repentance in his Life and Conversation.

Having thus (I say) dispatch'd the *Preparatives* to Repentance, it remains that I briefly consider the Third Particular proposed, to wit, the *subsequent Acts* and *Affections of Repentance*. For that Repentance may be

more fully effectual for and through the Blood of Christ, to the more perfect Amendment of Mens Hearts and Lives, it is highly requisite that the Penitent (after solemn Confession of his Sins to God) take Revenge upon himself for his Sins, by Penitential Humiliation, (*Ministeria Penitentiae*, as *Tertullian* calls them) upon the due Performance of which the Efficacy of Repentance very much depends, which may be reduced to these Three.

1. *Confession* to God, and to his Ministers.
2. The *Penitential Discipline* of Mortification; under which Head, Confession to Men, and Satisfaction may be ranked.
3. *Newness* of Life.

Some of which Particulars perhaps are not so expressly commanded in Scripture; yet they are of the Nature of those Actions, which (as *Grotius* excellently speaks, *Potentior omni Lege dictat Spiritus*) are dictated by the Law of Nature, and the Spirit of God, more powerfully than by any written Law.

1. That *Confession to God* is a Condition necessarily requisite to Pardon of Sins, is a Truth so undeniably founded upon the Law of Nature, and the positive Laws of God, that it cannot be doubted of by any who are either Men, or Christians.

And although God, who knoweth the Secrets of Mens Hearts, and understandeth their Thoughts afar off (*Psf.* 44. 21. *Psf.* 139. 2.)

2.) needeth not any such means of Discovery, yet all Men have acknowledged a Confession of their Faults, both open and secret, to be necessary to their Pardon; an Acknowledgment and humble Deprecation of the Offence, to be requisite to the Absolution of the Offender.

God first excited ^a *Adam* to an ingenuous Confession of his Sin, when he graciously called unto him, and said, *Adam*, where art thou? And after an humble Acknowledgment of his Offence, and the Penance of Three hundred Years (*jam inde in se ipso Pœnitentiam dedicavit*, as ^b *Tertullian* speaks) he was then pleased first to dedicate and consecrate this great Duty of Repentance.

Holy *David* acknowledged his Sins, and did not hide his Iniquities, he confess'd his Transgressions to the Lord (*Pf.* 32. 5.) who, upon his Confession, mercifully forgave the Iniquity of his Sin. For it is only he who confesseth and forsaketh his Sin, who shall find Mercy, (*Prov.* 28. 13.) And altho' he were a King, and that a Valiant and Victorious one; yet he voluntarily made a Publick Confession of the scandalous Sins of Adultery and Murther he had been guilty of, in a Psalm (the 51st Psalm) which he composed on purpose upon that Account; and deliver'd

^a ^b *Tertul. de Pœnitent. Cap. 2. & Cap. 12.* Adam mourned 300 Years upon the Mountains of *India*. Dr. *Taylor's Unum Necessar.*

to the chief Musician, to be sung publickly in the Place of God's Worship, before the whole Congregation, as a perpetual Memorial of his unfeigned Sorrow, and Repentance for his Sin.

It is a Duty commanded by God (^a *Numb.* 5. 7.) used by all the Family of the Faithful before and under the Law; enjoyn'd by *St. John* (1 *John* 1. 9.) and enforced with the great Advantages of being a Condition requisite to forgiveness of Sins, and cleansing us from all Unrighteousness.

Yea, the whole Church, both Jewish and Christian, constantly had Forms of *Publick Confession*, as is evident from the Ninth Chapters of *Nehemiah*, and *Daniel*, and the Liturgical Confessions of the Jewish and Christian Churches. And indeed of whom ought we to ask Forgiveness, but of him whom we have offended? To whom ought we to sue for Pardon, but to him who is both able and willing to save us? To whom ought we to confess our Sins, but to him who is Faithful and Just to forgive us our Sins? who out of his Mercy hath annexed Pardon to Confession, and out of his Justice will perform that which his Goodness hath promised.

Let us all then confess our Sins, and abhor our selves in Dust and Ashes. Let us but resolve to arise, and go to our Father,

^a See *Ansiv. in Loc.*

and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee; and our Gracious Father will prevent our Petitions; he will run and meet us while we are afar off, and but yet on the Way; he will have Compassion on us, and fall on our Necks and kiss us; yea, there shall be Joy before him in Heaven at our Conversion, and the Glorious Company of Angels shall sing Hallelujahs at our return.

Da pater semper eis gaudere de Nobis!
Grant, O Lord, that their Joy may be continued and encreased by our Conversion; that our Sorrow may give us Comfort here, and Joy with thy Angels hereafter.

But further; it is highly requisite, if not necessary, that the Penitent afflict his Soul by *Penitential Humiliations*; in the Performance of which he will act more safely, if for procuring that inward Qualification and Disposition of Mind, which is requisite to remission of Sins, he consult the Pastors of the Church, those who are entrusted with the Ministry of Reconciliation, that by their wholesom Advice that Disposition, which is necessary to the regaining of God's Favour, forfeited by great Sins, and heinous Breaches of our Baptismal Vow, may be the more easily obtained; and that upon their *Absolution* the Penitent may thereby receive greater Comfort, and more well-grounded Hopes of the Pardon of his Sins, having been contrained,
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by the Authority of the Church, to undergo those Acts of Mortification and Humiliation, which might reasonably perswade them of the Sincerity of his Contrition. For that the Church hath always actually been possessed of a Power of enjoyning *Penance* upon Notorious and scandalous Sinners, that thereby they who had been excommunicated by the Church, should not be admitted into its Communion, until they had publicly confessed their Sins, with much Sorrow, and open Shame humbly deprecating their Offences, is a Truth so plainly to be deduced through all Ages of the Church, that it hath not been deny'd by those who have question'd the Right of this Power, and cannot be enervated but by resolving the Society of the Church into that of the State, and making all Ecclesiastical Power a meer Imposture.

For supposing the Church to be a *Society distinct from the State* (as it is confessed to have always been *de facto*) and if it hath been always *de facto*, it will rationally follow, that it always had a *Right* to be so; it being next to impossible, that in such a Variety of Mens Humours, Inclinations, and Interests, the whole World should from the Beginning have submitted to the same Government, agreed in the same Rules and Laws of Society, if they had not been deliver'd by *Apostolical Authority*, and founded upon *Di-*
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vine Right; for granting, I say, the Church to be a distinct Society founded upon God's Law, having its peculiar Laws and Rights of Government, it will follow, abstracting from Divine Revelation, that it must have a Right of admitting into its Society those who have undertaken to be governed by its Laws, and excluding from it (until they have made due Satisfaction) those who shall transgress the Conditions of its Communion.

And can there any Church be shewn from the very Infancy of Christianity, in which any one, who had notoriously and openly transgressed the Conditions of his Baptismal Vow, was not obliged to undergo the Discipline of Penance, before he could be admitted into the Communion of the Church? The incestuous *Corinthian*, of whom we read, *1 Cor. 5. 2 Cor. 7.* for having married his Mother in Law, was excommunicated by *St. Paul*, was not admitted into the Church, until by regular Acts of Mortification and Penitential Humiliation, his Flesh was destroy'd, his Body was brought under, and he had given satisfactory Demonstrations of the Sincerity of his Repentance; as being almost swallow'd up by overmuch Sorrow. He was deliver'd over unto Satan, but for Edification and Reformation, not Destruction, for that was the chief End of their Censures, and Discipline; which was Charitable, Tender, and Compassionate; and in exercising of which

which the Church did Penance as well as the Penitent; by removing him from the Congregation with Mourning and great Lamentation. He suffer'd the Punishments which were inflicted of *many*, that is, the Censures of the Church, until there was evident Danger of his being *swallowed up* (2 Cor. 2. 6, 7.) with overmuch Sorrow.

Such was the Ecclesiastical Discipline of those Apostolick Times, and such it continued in the first and purest Ages, until the Corruptions of the Church made its Discipline be despised, and the Number and Authority of Sinners over-power'd and over-aw'd the weak and unassisted Censures of the Church. Then publick Confession degenerated into a private ludicrous Penance; and an easie pecuniary Commutation superseded a strict, personal Satisfaction: Until this Power of the Church, being by Degrees enfeebled, was at last totally lost, and she had Nothing left of her Primitive Authority^a, but earnest Desires, and *Wishes* that this Godly Discipline might be restored. And certainly it is a Thing very much *to be wished for*, that the

^a Preface to the Commination.

Jejunium sic servabis: Primum cave ab omni probro & turpi verbo, & ab omni Noxia Cupiditate, & purifica sensum tuum ab omni Vanitate seculi hujus. 2o Illo die quo jejunabis, nihil omnino gustabis, nisi Panem & aquam: Et 3o Computata quantitate Cibi, quem ceteris Diebus comesturus eras, sumptum Diei illius quem factururus es, sepones & dabis viduæ pupillo, aut, &c. Herem. Lib. 3. Simil. 5. Cap. 13. p. 61. Edit. Coteler.

Apostolical godly Discipline could be restored; and that Christians would think themselves obliged in Conscience to submit to it; or at least to the private Exercise of Penitential Humiliation.

And indeed, there can be but small Hopes of seeing any Reformation in the general Corruption of Mens Manners, so generally complain'd of, except this Discipline be renew'd; and the Want of it is none of the least Causes of the Degeneracy of this Age: For certainly if this rigorous Discipline were severely and constantly observ'd; if every open Notorious Offender were put to publick Penance; if he were excluded the Society of the Faithful; if Christians (according to the Apostolical Command) were not to keep company with him, no, *not to eat with him*, until he had made Satisfaction to the Church; Men would be, if not really better, yet more shy, and less Impudent in sinning; and the publick Example of unpunish'd Vice would not add Authority to Sin, and the frequency of it spread its Contagion. Men would not dare to come scarce Cold from the Bed of Lust to the Holy Sacrament, and from the undigested Riots of the Tables of Devils, to the Table of the Lord.

Neither indeed is it so easie a Thing to repent and *procure Pardon* of heinous Sins *after Baptism*, as very many imagine; it is not a bare *Lord have Mercy upon us*, which can satis-

satisfie for such Sins; or an Abstinence from the *outward* Actions of Vice, which can denominate us sincere Penitents; but a crucifying the Flesh, and the Affections thereof, rooting out the very Habits of Sins, and the giving a contrary Bent and Inclination to our corrupt Affections.

For alas, although the Rigours of External Mortification have been censured as *Popish*, and Superstitious, by Men of too delicate tempers to undergo the Severities of so harsh a Discipline; yet I must be bold to affirm, that no Man can be able through the Spirit to mortify the Deeds of the Flesh (1 *Cor.* 9. 27.) except he keep under his Body, and bring it into Subjection; except he restrain his Soul and Body, as a weaned Child, and keep it low, like as a Child that is weaned; for it is impossible to find an humble Spirit in pamper'd Flesh, or a contrite Soul in an unmortify'd Body.

Without these Instruments of Repentance, thou can'st not so mortify thy Flesh, as to work out Repentance, an Essential Condition of the Covenant of Grace. Without these Severities the Body is not to be kept under, it will rebel against the Spirit; and whilst thou pampere'st the Beast, thou wilt starve the Man, (2 *Sam.* 12. 16.) Arguments from Reason are not the proper Weapons to subdue the Sensual Part, which must be as it were forced and storm'd by sensible Acts of Humiliation. Holy *David* fasted, and lay
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all Night upon the Earth, when he interceded with God for his sick Child; he wept, (2 Sam. 15. 30.) and went cover'd, and bare-foot, when he fled from his Son *Abithom*. He arose (*Pf.* 119. 62.) even at Midnight to give Thanks unto the Lord; His Eyes prevented the Night-Watches, and the dawning of the Morning (*Pf.* 119. 147, 148.) St. *John* the Baptist, neither eat Bread, nor drink Wine, nor Strong Drink, and his Meat was Locusts and Wild Honey (*Matth.* 3. 4. *Luk.* 1. 15.) St. *Paul* did *ὁπορώμενος ὁ ἑαυτοῦ* (1 Cor. 9. 27.) beat his Body; he did *δρασκεῖν*, bring it under and subdue it; He was in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness, (2 Cor. 11. 27.) *Timothy* was allow'd by St. *Paul* but a little Wine for his Stomachs sake, and often Infirmities (1 Tim. 5. 23.) enough for Physick, not for Pleasure, as St. *Chrysostom* notes upon the Place.

Now if these Holy Men, who had so great a Share of the Grace of God, and such Powerful Assistances of his Holy Spirit, thought these Austerities necessary to the Mortification of the Flesh, or corrupt Part in us (for that the Scripture most commonly means by Flesh,) what Severities are required to the bringing of our Bodies into Subjection, who certainly fall short of their Graces, and have added flame to the Heat of our Sinful Inclinations, by artificial Contrivance of Ingenious Luxury? And I dare be bold to say, that
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our Modern Way of living will never produce a *Moses*, or an *Elijah*, Men that can stand in the Gap, and by their Prayers open and shut the Windows of Heaven.

I have insisted the longer upon this Topic, because it is one of the most necessary *Instruments* of Repentance, the Neglect and Contempt of which (as Bishop *Andrews* has observ'd) is the Cause that there is not that Gift of Continency now, that was in the Primitive Church.

But I shall dispatch this Head, (although upon a hasty review, I find that I have but lightly touched upon some Things, which might deserve a fuller Discussion,) because I despair to perswade any Penitent to undergo such Austerities, or to arise to such Heights of Zeal and Devotion on a sudden; Men must be gradually trained up in the School of Mortification, under the prudent Conduct of a *Spiritual Guide*. When they have successfully conquer'd one Vice, weaned themselves from one darling Lust, they will find so great Pleasure, so great Satisfaction in this Spiritual Conquest over themselves, that by God's Grace they will persevere, and go on unto Perfection, and by Degrees arise to the highest pitch, and the most Heroick Acts of Self-Denial, and *Mortification*.

But I proceed to the Third and last Particular proposed, *Vivification*, or Newness of Life, without which these *Bodily Exercises* will

will profit thee little, and thou canst have no assurance of the Sincerity of thy Repentance, the Tree being to be known by its Fruit.

When then (briefly to sum up what has been said) a Sinner, upon a serious Consideration of the Danger and Odiousness of Sin, humbly applies himself to the Methods of God's Grace, and from a hearty Sorrow for his Sins proceeds to a perfect Detestation of them, and by Prayer, and Fasting, and all the Holy Methods of *Mortification*, crucifies his Flesh, and the Affections thereof, our Heavenly Father, who gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask, grants him the Conquest of his Lusts, and not only turns him *from Sin*, but turns him *to himself*, fixes his Heart upon its right Object, purges and purifies his Affections, washes him thoroughly from his Iniquity, and cleanses him from his Sin; creates in him a clean Heart, and renews a right Spirit within him; and if he doth not by relapsing into Sin grieve the Holy Spirit, which has thus sealed him to the Day of Redemption, he will give him more and greater Degrees of Grace, and his Path shall be *as the shining Light* (Prov. 4. 18.) *which shines more and more unto the perfect Day.* God, in the Progress of this New Birth, first gives the Penitent firm Purposes, and Resolutions of a New Life, and then heightens these Resolutions into actual Performances:

The Will being thus moved stirs up the Affections; and his Love of Heaven, and Heavenly Things, will excite his Delight; and his Delight his Hope; and his Hope will be swallowed up in the Fruition of them by *Faith* here, and in the actual Possession of them in Glory hereafter.

His active Faith, pregnant with good Works, will produce a constant *Uniform Obedience* to all the Commandments of God, so that in a continued Progress of a long Piety, it will grow as difficult for him to commit Sin, as before it was to avoid it. His *Flesh* being weaned from Carnal Objects, will put on the Desires of the Spirit, and not only his *Soul* will thirst for thee, but his *Flesh will long after thee, O God* (Psal. 63.) Such a Divine Frame of Soul, such a Heavenly Temper of Body had the Holy Psalmist obtained by his remembring God on his Bed, and meditating on him in the Night-watches (*Pf.* 63. 6.) by his frequent Fastings and fervent Prayers, by watering his Couch with Tears, by bringing his Soul low, and making it even as a weaned Child.

What remains, but that we also should seriously set about this great and important Duty of Repentance, even those who have by their frequent Sins grieved that Spirit which sanctified them in the Laver of Regeneration, and by their presumptuous, and wilful Provocations have broken the Conditions of their
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Baptismal Vow, even those to whom Custom hath made Vice natural and pleasant, and Virtue irksome and loathsome; What Care ought they to take to mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, and to quicken those Graces, which through their Neglect are twice dead, nay, even totally eradicated, and plucked up by the Roots?

The Condition of such Men is indeed dangerous, but not altogether desperate. if they will be but humble and patient, and fortify themselves with strong Resolutions; if to frequent Prayers they will add no less frequent Meditation; if to a serious Consideration of the State of their own Souls, they will joyn firm Resolutions of amending what they find amiss; if they will back these Resolutions with constant Performances, they will by degrees advance and gain Ground upon their Enemy, and with great Courage and Christian Resolution they will quench the fiery Darts of Satan (*1 Pet. 2. 22.*)

But if we would not, according to the true Proverb, return with the Dog to his Vomit, and with the Sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the Mire; if we would not run in a continual Circle of Repenting and Sinning, and Sinning and Repenting, we must by frequent Prayers and Fastings, and all other Acts of Mortification or Penitential Humiliation (for I cannot dissemble the Necessity of Mortification to the producing a last-

ing and effectual Repentance) fix our Resolutions, and quicken our Endeavours; we must, as *Daniel* did sometimes, abstain from pleasant Meats, and not by frequent Excesses, administer flame to our Lusts, and diet our selves for a Temptation. *In quantum tibi non peperceris in tantum tibi Deus, crede, parcat*; the less thou sparest thy self, the more will God spare thee, said severe and acute *Tertullian*.

We complain indeed, and that justly, of the proneness of our Flesh, or corrupt inbred Inclination to all Wickedness, when it is we our selves that excite its Natural Inclination, that add Wings to its Desires, and Fuel to its Flame. If we would withdraw the Matter which feeds it, the Flesh would quickly grow tame and pliant; if we did not so much mind fleshly and earthly Things, our Affections would be set upon God, their proper Object, and there would be Nothing upon Earth, which we would desire besides him. If we, through the Spirit, would cleanse our Hearts, and subdue, mortifie and purifie our Bodies, and let them be made fit Temples for the Holy Ghost, God would rejoyce in the new Workmanship of his Creation; the Father would dwell in the Temple, which he has thus prepared and consecrated for his Reception: For (as our Blessed Saviour has promised, *John* 14. 23.) *If any Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him,*

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him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant us through the Merits and Satisfaction of our alone Saviour Jesus Christ; To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be rendered, as is most due, all Honour, Power, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, from this time forth, and for evermore. *Amen.*





SERMON XIV.

The Disquietude and Perplexity of a Sinner, under Affliction, and Judgments.

MICAH VI. 6, 7.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God? Shall I come before him with Burnt Offerings, with Calves of a Year Old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?

THE Prophet, at the Beginning of this Prophecy, had forewarned the People of the near approach of God's Judgments; which he calls, at the third Verse of the first Chapter, the Lord's *coming forth out of his Place*; and his coming to tread upon the High places of the Earth; by which Phrases the Prophets

phets mean God's manifesting himself in a Way of Judgment; and of overthrowing and subduing the strongest Places and the stoutest Hearts. Hereupon the People (as is usual in a Prospect of Danger and Distress) were in a great Consternation, inquietude of Thought, and perplexity of Mind: And are introduced by the Prophet uttering such abrupt, and passionate Forms of Speech, as are commonly used by Men in Distress; and which they themselves had made use of on this Occasion. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, say they, and bow my self before the High God? Is God come forth to meet us with his Judgments; and shall not we prepare to meet Him with Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings? For to *come before God*, signifies to meet him; and is a Phrase taken from the ancient Custom still in use amongst the Eastern Nations, who were wont, when they were not able to resist the Conqueror, to come out to meet him with Gifts and Presents, and with humble Gestures and Prostrations of Body to implore his Mercy. Thus *Jacob* met *Esau*; and the whole City of *Jerusalem* went out to meet *Alexander the Great*, when he came with his Army to besiege that City. You see here, my beloved Brethren, that the People were in a great trouble and disquiet of Mind, upon the Alarm of God's Judgments; and were unanimously convinced, that his Justice was to be

satisfied, and appeased. For they look'd upon God as an offended Prince, and knowing him to be the Creator, Lord and Governor of all Things, thought that his Justice required a Punishment, or a Satisfaction; that his Authority might not be contemned, nor his Laws disregarded. And this is a Truth which Natural Conscience dictates unto all Men; that Governors and Magistrates must punish, that Society may be preserved, that their Persons might not be villify'd, and their Laws broken. And does not, do you think, the just Government of God require, that Offenders be punished? And would not Wickedness overspread the World, if it were not so? And if Magistrates ought to punish, may not God much more do so, who gave us our Being, and preserves us in it; and has full Power over the Works of his own Hands? Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? And is it not right, just, and equitable, that they who sow Wickedness, should reap the Fruits of it? Private Persons may indeed, as Prudence shall direct, pardon offences against themselves; but Magistrates, and Persons in their Publick Capacities, are not to pass over Publick Faults, because they are Protectors and Conservators of Publick Justice; which suffers much, and will at last be destroy'd, by the impunity of Offenders. And in such Relation stands God to us, for he is not only the Party offended by Sin, but he is the
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Governor of the World; the Sovereign Law-giver to his Creatures: He is the Lord, and the High God; who is to see and to take Care, that the Eternal Laws of Justice be not contemned, by Transgressions being unpunish'd. It was upon this Account, that they address'd themselves unto the Prophet, to know how they should satisfy, and appease the Justice of the Sovereign Lord and Governor of the World, as being convinced that God's Justice requires, either a Punishment for Sin, or a Satisfaction for it. Where-withal (say they) shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? What shall we do, what shall we say, how shall we behave our selves? Skin for Skin, yea, all that we have, will we give for our Lives. There is nothing so rare, nothing so dear, nothing so precious unto us, which we will not part with. Does God require Burnt-Offerings? Why we will offer unto him our Calves of a Year old, the first, best, and choicest of them. Will he be pleas'd with Rams? We are ready to offer 'Thousands of them: And if our Oyl will satisfy him, we will press all the Olives upon our Mountains, and make Torrents and Rivers of Oyl flow down from them. Nay, we will go further; for we will give our First-born for our Transgression, and the Fruit of our Body for Sin. We will with *Abraham* readily offer our *Isaacs* upon the Altar, our Children, yea, the

the dearest of them, our First-born, the beginning of our Strength, and of our Love. The Prophet does here after a most admirable Manner represent the behaviour of a wicked Sinner, under a sudden Sense of Guilt, an Expectation of Punishment, and a Consciousness of his own unpreparedness for it; and the utter impossibility of his avoiding it. The Sinner in such a Case is usually amazed and confounded, knows not what to do, nor whither to fly; knows that God is just, but knows not how and after what manner to be reconciled unto him; knows not by what, or after what manner to perform it. In such a Consternation are Sinners often found, when a Sickness seizes them on a sudden, and Death approaches, or when publick Judgment and Calamities are ready to revolve them in a common Ruin. When Sin lyeth at the Door, what a Confusion is an unprepared Soul in? How uneasie is he under the Expectation of the approaching Punishment; and how does he rack his Thoughts to find out Ways to avoid it?

But remember what is told thee, wretched Sinner, and do not put off thy Repentance till the approach of imminent and unavoidable Dangers; but prepare betimes to meet thy God, O Sinner, whilst He is yet a great way off, and upon the Way; Go forth with Tears of Repentance, and humbly sue for
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Conditions of Peace: Or else sit down first and consider, whether thou art able to meet him that cometh against thee, who hath Millions and Millions of Angels to attend him, and fight for him; who hath the whole World at his Command: Consider whether thou art able to dwell with devouring Fire, and everlasting Burnings. O vain Man! thou dost not certainly believe that there is a Hell, or that God is a consuming Fire, or else thou wouldst fear to offend him; for thou art not able to endure the Burnings of a Fever, and art restless under the smallest Torture: A Fit of the Gout, or of the Stone, does quite unman thee; and how canst thou then endure the Wrath of God, and everlasting Burnings? But if thou dost not think that there are such Punishments ordained for impenitent Sinners, consider with thy self, art thou able to meet God in his Temporal Judgments; Canst thou preserve thy self from a raging Plague? Art thou sure thou hast an infallible Antidote against Infection? Canst thou keep thy Foot sure when the Earth trembleth; and canst thou avoid being swallow'd up, when it gapeth to receive thee? The Inhabitants of the Earth of old, were wont to learn Righteousness, when the Judgments of God were in it; and they who have made a Mock at Sin, have been seldom so hardy, as to make a Mock at Punishments. But alas, we are
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fallen into an Age, which is so fool-hardy, as to mock at, and to disbelieve the most sensible and most undeniable of God's Judgments, or hear, and talk of them, and sit under them with an unconcerned Stupidity. The Scripture tells us that *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and the Cities about them, which were destroy'd by Fire from Heaven, are set forth for an Example of Eternal Fire; their Temporal destruction by Brimstone and Fire from Heaven was designed by God, as a Representation and resemblance of their Eternal Sufferings. And without doubt one End of Providence in preserving burning Mountains in some Parts of the World, which at fit Seasons, ordained by Providence, break forth, and overwhelm the Neighbouring Country with a terrible, a swift, and an unavoidable Destruction, is to keep up in the Minds of Men an Example of the Vengeance of Eternal Fire: And those dreadful Earthquakes, which some Countries have lately felt, are an Example of what will come to pass, at the Dissolution of the World; when the Earth shall tremble, and the Hills quake, at the Presence of the Lord, who is a consuming Fire. O then, my beloved Brethren, the Judgments of God are very terrible; and when extraordinary Things appear in the World, we are to take Notice of them, and we are to regard the Works of the Lord, and the Operations of his Hand, with a due awe, and Dread of his Justice; with a Godly, not a Superstitious fear,

fear; with such a Fear as drives us to Repentance, not which only amazes and confounds us. The fear of the People of *Israel* in my Text, was accompanied with so great a Consternation, and Distraction of Mind, that they cast about in their Thoughts all manner of Ways, how to find out the true Method of being rid of the Cause of it. And the Prophet does, in representation of them, give a most lively Description of the anxious and confused Thoughts of despairing Sinners, who knowing not the right Way of being reconciled to God, make use of false Means, and intricate themselves in endless Doubts and Perplexities. Wherewith shall we come; what shall we do; what will serve; What shall I give? Shall I macerate my Body with long Fastings and severe Macerations; Shall I give all my Goods to the Poor; Shall I give my Body to be Burnt? They will part with any Thing, when they are in this Confusion, but their Lusts, and their beloved Sins. But fear not their fear; but sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread. That is, fear God indeed, and use your utmost Endeavours to be reconciled unto him; but let it be after the manner he has commanded. Which, according to the Answer of the Prophet, is by the inward Renovation of the Heart, and not only by Acts of outward Religion, but as they proceed from the Heart and Affections, and are Means and

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Instruments of producing a true and a thorough Change of Mind; it is briefly in doing justly, in loving Mercy, and in walking humbly with our God; with a Heart and Affections truly sincere and upright in his Service. For natural Conscience is not alone able of it self to instruct a Man in the true Way of being reconciled to God; but He alone, by the Declarations of his Will, can teach us wherein it consists. For Natural Conscience can only in general tell us, that Sin deserves Punishment, and that a Just and Holy Governor, whose Laws have been broken, will be so True to the Eternal Rules of Justice, as to punish the wilful and obstinate Sinner; because it is for the good of the Offender, as well as for the necessary Honour of a Judge and Ruler; and the Support of his Government. But it is from Scripture alone that we can learn, that the Blood of Christ is the only Satisfaction for Sin; and that when we have offended God, and broken his Laws, there is no other Way to be reinstated in his Favour, but by forsaking Sin; by turning our Heart, and our Affections from it, and by becoming a New Creature in all Holy and Godly Conversation; and all other things without this, will avail but little to thy eternal Welfare; for if I give my Body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. Not as if Alms-giving, Prayer, Fasting, were not necessary Duties, and of great Use as to their pro-

proper Ends; but that they profit but a little without a Holy Life, and an inward Change of Mind. If thou hast therefore offended God, resolve to meet him, as the returning Prodigal did, with an humble Mind, and say unto him; Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son, nor even thy Servant, or to have any even the meanest Relation to thee: But, O do not utterly cast me off; for I had rather be a Door-keeper in thy House, than to dwell in the Tents of Iniquity. Smite upon thy Breast, and say with the Publican, Be merciful to me a miserable Sinner.

Turn to God after his own Manner, with Humility, Sorrow, and Resolutions of Amendment; and then he will repent and turn unto thee. And do not expect, wretched Sinner, that thou shalt always go on unpunish'd in thy Sins; for Judgment will at last overtake thee, and find thee in thy Sins, and thou shalt perish in them. Thou wilt either come to an untimely End; be cut off in the midst of thy Sins; or be seized by Sicknefs, and depart the World in Horror, and Consternation of Mind. Thou wilt some time or other be at the brink of Destruction; and be seiz'd with a *Panick* Fear; and wilt then have restless Thoughts, and an unquiet Mind; and wilt be convinced that something should be done, that God might be reconciled; but wilt be in such a Perplexity, that thou knowest
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not what to do, or canst not perform it when thou dost. Miserable Sinner, who hath deceived thee, and how camest thou to think that thou shalt always enjoy a Calm, and a content of Mind, in thy provoking Impieties and daring Sins? Dost thou not think that Conscience will some time or other break in upon thee, and surprize thee in thy Mirth, and dampall thy Jollity? Be sure that some time or other some Sicknes will confine thee to thy Bed; some Fire or Losses will rob thee of thy Goods; some Affliction will discompose thee, and trouble thy Repose; or at least, Age will make thee unable to enjoy thy wonted Pleasure; and to be sure Death will one time or other Summon thee to appear before God's Tribunal. How wilt thou then be perplexed and confounded; how wilt thou then wish, that thou could'st recal Time; and with vain and fruitless Complaints condemn thy self and thy own Folly, and say with the like Amazement with those in my Text; Wherewith shall I come before God; how shall I appear before him? I have sinned, I have sinned, and have not Time, nor Will, nor Grace to repent; and what shall I do unto thee, O thou just Judge and offended God? If thou wouldst therefore avoid these doleful Complaints, turn to God whilst it is to Day, and resolve to do Justice, and to walk humbly before him, that so thou may'st be happy in his Mercy and Favour here, and in Glory with him to all Eternity.

S E R.



SERMON XV.

The Disquietude and Perplexity of a Sinner, under Affliction, and Judgments.

MICAH VI. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the High God? Shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, the fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?

8. *He hath shewed thee O Man, what is Good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk Humbly with thy God.*

N the former Verses are contained an earnest Request of the People to the Prophet, to know how they should approach God, and pacify his Anger, who had threatned them with a speedy and a great Destruction. And they do express after a

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most admirable manner the disquiet, and restless Thoughts of a disturb'd, and discompos'd Spirit, under a Sense of Guilt, and the Fear of an approaching Judgment. Wherewithal shall we come; what shall we bring; will this do; will that satisfy? Nay, they offer what was not in their Power to perform, even Rivers of Oil; and what was unlawful for them to do, their Children for Sacrifices.

From what I discoursed the last Opportunity, you may draw these following Observations.

(1.) That it is the dictate of natural Conscience, that God, as he is the righteous Governor and Judge of the World, will punish presumptuous, impenitent Sinners, that the Honour of his Government and Justice, and the Authority of his Laws might be preserved; and that Men might be deterred from sinning for the future.

(2.) That natural Conscience cannot of itself rightly inform us, wherein the true Way consists of being reconciled to God. And that, when Men are left to themselves, they take vain and unlawful Ways to attain this End. As here the People, when in a great Consternation, think to avert the imminent Judgment, by offering to God more than he required in his Law; as if their Pardon were to be procured, and God were to be bribed by the Greatness and Preciousness of their Offer-

Offerings; and also proffer'd to give what he had absolutely forbidden as an Abomination unto him, even their First-born, and the Fruit of their Body.

(3.) That Sin (especially when it is threatened with an unavoidable and a great Punishment) will create Trouble of Mind, and Disquiet of Conscience, and will put a Man into Confusion of Thought, perplexity of Mind, and amazing Fears and Apprehensions. The Conscience that knows and is convinced that they who commit such Things are worthy of Death, will, when it sees that Death approaching, work Tribulation and Anguish in the Soul of the Sinner, and make him cry out with those in the *Acts*, when they were pricked at Heart, Men, and Brethren, what shall we do to be saved?

(4.) We may observe that Men account nothing more dear to them than their Lives; Skin for Skin, all that a Man hath will he give for his Life: And the *Israelites* in my Text would part with all that was most dear and near to them, rather than part with their Lives. While Men's Affections and Passions indeed are warm in the pursuit of worldly Goods or Pleasures, we see daily that they hazard their Lives to obtain them: But when their Passions are once calm, and the eagerness of the Pursuit is over, and Reason and Conscience are at leisure to consider things; Life, and especially the Hopes of an Eter-

nal one, will preponderate and weigh down all other Considerations. Our Passions raise Clouds and Fumes, which darken the Mind; but when the Light of Conscience and calm Reason dispel those Clouds and Mists of Error and Prepossession, Heaven as it were presents it self unto us, and we take a View of the vast Spaces above us, and our Thoughts are swallow'd up in Eternity; and then this Span of Time, and this small Point of Earth we tread on, seem nothing in Comparison of them, and we would willingly part with that, and all we have, to live in Everlasting Happiness. It is in this Case as with those who Traffick; who when they are intent upon their Profit, and have their Minds wholly engaged and fixt upon their Employment, neglect all danger for it; but when a Storm arises, and a Tempest threatens them with unavoidable Destruction, then Reason and Conscience over-balance Profit, and they would give all they have to save their Lives. And thus is it with a Sinner, when Danger approaches; for then Conscience presents Things in their true Shapes, and he would part with all his worldly Goods to save his Soul.

(5.) But although Life appears at such times very dear unto the Sinner; yet his Lusts and Passions have taken such deep root in his Mind, that when he professes himself willing to part with all the worldly Things he

he has, yet at the same time retains a Love for Sin, and is ready to part with all which God requires, but his Lusts and beloved Pleasures. Thus the *Israelites* would offer Burnt-Offerings, and Rivers of Oil, and their beloved Children too; but as for their darling Sins, they were so dear to them, and had so possess'd their Souls, that they could not part with them. From whence appears the great Danger of deferring Repentance till old Age, or, as some do, till their Death-Bed; when Sin is so deeply rooted, that it is become Natural to the Sinner; and like the swelling Leprosy, has eaten so into the very Soul of the Man, that it cannot be gotten out, but by the Destruction of the Leprous House.

(*Lastly,*) We may observe from the Words I have read unto you, that nothing will avail to attain the favour of God, without the inward Conversion of the Heart, shew'd and demonstrated in Holiness of Life and Conversation. For the *Israelites* offer'd Sacrifices more than God had commanded; but these being only outward Performances, they were rejected by the Prophet. From whence Christians also may learn, that Prayer, Fasting, Alms-Deeds, and all the good Works that they can do, will not avail, except they come from the Heart; and are perform'd with sincere, honest, and upright Intentions; not out of Vain-glory, Formality, and Hypo-

crify; but to the Honour of God, the Good of others, and the Salvation of our own Souls. For if a Man give all his Goods to the Poor, and his Body to be burnt, it profiteth him nothing without Charity; that is, except he did it out of Love to God and Man; and not out of Pride and Ostentation.

These Words are an Answer of the Prophet to the foregoing Question, and contain in them the *whole Sum* or *Duty of Man*; the Substance of what God requires to be practised by us, in order to Eternal Happiness. In which we may observe,

1. That altho' the People had ask'd, where-with they should satisfy God, and expiate their Sins, that the Prophet makes no mention of Satisfaction or Reconcilement in his Answer to them; but only tells them what was their Duty, and what was the Good which God required of them. To teach them, that although God requir'd Sacrifices of them, that yet they were not the principal Thing where-with he was pleased; neither were they properly Attonements for Sin, but were acceptable in Consideration of the full Satisfaction and Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross; of which the Legal Sacrifices were the Types and Shadows. He had shewed thee, O Man! saith the Prophet; as if he had said, Trouble not thy self concerning the Matter of satisfying God, for thou art not able to make
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any Recompence to his offended Justice; not all the Calves in your Stalls, the Flocks in your Fields, nor all the Olives upon your Mountains. What canst thou give to God for thy Sin, of all thy worldly Goods, which is of any real Value in his Sight? What are all thy Possessions but his own Gifts, and his own Creatures, and wilt thou satisfy God with what is none of thine? What is thine own, but Sin; and what Good hast thou, but what thou hast received from him? Nothing therefore that thou canst do can satisfy God; because what is good in thy Actions is none of thy own; or if it were, it could bear no proportion to the infinite Justice of an offended Deity. Talk not therefore of any Satisfaction or Expiations for Sin; but leave that to God, who hath already accepted of the Satisfaction of the Blood of his Son, the Lamb slain from the Beginning of the World in the Divine Decrees and Determinations. Neither do you think that all the Legal Offerings he hath commanded, will any whit avail to this End, without Christ's Sacrifice; or that thou canst be partaker of the Benefits of that, without living a Holy Life. Why therefore dost thou torment thy self, and rack thy Thoughts, to find out Ways of appeasing God? Thou art indeed a miserable Offender, and if thou only considerest thy own Sins, thou hast just Cause to fear Punishment; thou mayst justly fear least each part of the

Creation be armed against thee, in defence of its Creator; least Thunder should strike thee dead from Heaven; or the Earth open to swallow thee up; but if thou lookest upon God not only as a just God, but as a God reconciled to Sinners by the Death of his Son, do not trouble thy self to invent new Ways and Satisfactions of thy own; for God is satisfy'd, by a Way worthy himself, worthy his Honour: Only mind what he hath required of thee, perform that, and thou art safe. And this is thy Duty, O Man, this is what God requireth of thee. It is nothing which is costly or chargeably; nothing which is really unpleasant, or disagreeable to thy Soul; but what is highly reasonable, and full of true Delight, and real Satisfaction. It is to behave thy self like a Man, and not like a Beast, and to do what the Light of Nature requireth of thee, as good and right: It is to curb thy Passions, moderate thy unruly Affections, not to degrade thy self into a lower Rank of Beings, and be as a Beast before thy Creator. The Psalmist (*Psalms* 73. 22.) confesses, that when he was foolish and ignorant, he was as a Beast before God; that is, he regarded only present things, judg'd meerly by Sense, and not Reason; and was therefore, in the Sight and Judgment of God, as a Beast, and not a Man. And therefore the Prophet by these Words; O Man, puts the Jews in Mind, that the Duty which God

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required, was such as was suitable to humane Nature, and became a Rational, a Spiritual, a Man-like Duty and Religion, consisting in inward Affections, and Practices flowing from them; and not in barely external Worship, without the Heart and Life of it. And withal the Command which God requires of thee, O Man, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off, but it is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou mayest do it: That is, it is clearly revealed, and easie to be known; and much of it is written in legible Characters upon thy very Soul, so that thou canst not possibly be ignorant of it. Thou art not commanded to take long Pilgrimages, to make Satisfaction; or to think that the Afflicting of thy Body will commute for the Sin of thy Soul; but thou art bid to dwell at home, and consider thy self, and afflict thy Body no more than may conduce to the real Good of thy Soul, and Advancement of Piety; and to use all the Externals of Religion in Subordination to the great End of all, inward Holiness. If God had prescribed a harsh and a costly Religion to us Christians, thou mightest have had some Cause of Complaints; but when he hath bid thee only Wash, and be clean; when he hath bid thee only cease to do evil, and learn to do well, shalt thou turn away with *Naaman*, and be wroth? To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God: What is there
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in all this which is harsh or difficult ; what is there which is not light and easie, and which does not rather promote the Interest of Mankind, as to this World, than hinder and oppose it? For, who is there who does not naturally detest and abhor an unjust, a harsh and oppressing, a proud and an unmerciful Man? Is not, *Thou Knave*, one of the greatest Reproaches can be fixt upon a Person; and that of a cruel Oppressor, a Brand which can never be worn out? Whereas the just, upright, compassionate, meek, and humble Person, is beloved of God; and of evil as well as good Men, and most commonly goes down to the Grave in Peace; passes through this World with less Trouble than the Angry and Contentious, and always dies in Peace of Conscience, and has a Share of Joy in the Holy Ghost.

Let us not then, my beloved Brethren, be in a confused Posture when Sicknefs, Death, or Judgments approach us; and in a great Perplexity ask, wherewith the Lord will be pleased, and what thou shalt do to be saved; for the Thing is plain, and our Duty is writ in legible Characters in the Scriptures, and in our Consciences, so that he that runs may read them: God hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good; eschew Evil, and do Good; and thou shalt be blessed here, and to all Eternity hereafter.



SERMON XVI.

The Whole Duty of Man.

M I C A H VI. 8.

*Heb ath shewed thee, O Man, what is good,
and what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God.*



WE read in the Acts of the holy Apostles, that the *Jewish* Converts were touch'd with so great remorse at a Sermon of St. *Peter's*, that they were prick'd in their Hearts, and cry'd out with great Earnestness; Men and Brethren, what shall we do to be saved? In the like manner the *Jews*, to whom the Prophet speaks in the Words of my Text, being awaken'd with an Alarm of Judgments by the Prophet, address'd themselves unto him with the like Question, but as Men affrighted out of a deep Sleep, scarce awake, and after a confus'd and perplex'd manner: Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow our
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selves before the high God? What shall we do; what shall we offer; what doth the Lord require; what will he be pleased with? Shall we offer all our Flocks, and all our Oil to him? And if that will not do, will he accept of our first Born, the first and choicest of our Strength?

To this solicitous Question, the Prophet answers in the Words I have read unto you: *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, &c.*

In which Words he first shews them negatively, what was not the good Thing which God required of them, *viz.* that which they had propos'd to offer unto him, Sacrifices, and such like external Duties, chiefly Ceremonials. These he excludes, as *not* good *comparatively*, nor *of*, and *in* themselves. And then (Secondly) he positively and plainly tells them what was that *Good* which God would accept, and had chiefly required of them; and after an upright and conscientious manner he tells them, that the costliest Sacrifices were not good, and were nothing without a good Life; and that although God had expressly commanded them to offer their Sacrifices, that yet they were in themselves of little or no Value without the other.

And this Answer which God gave by the Prophet to the *Jews*, is also to be given by his Ministers under the Gospel to all Christians,

stians, who shall make Enquiry; to wit, that Holiness of Heart and Life, is the principal Thing which God requires of Christians; without which, Prayer, Fasting, Almshouses, and all the external Duties, and *instrumental* Parts of Religion, will avail but little to their Salvation.

For the *Jews* did generally observe the Externals of their Religion with great Exactness; and so far they did well; because God had required it of them. They sought God daily (as you may read in the 57th Chapter of *Isaiah*) and to the Shame of Christians, they took *Delight* in approaching to his Ordinances; and fasted, and afflicted themselves; they roared like Bears, and mourned like Doves; and cover'd (according to the Prophet's Expression) the very Altar of God with Tears; and yet all this, which if accompanied with Sincerity, inward Holiness, and the Fruits of it in a good Life, had been extremely pleasing unto God, was rejected by him, because it was but a partial Obedience to his Laws; and was not attended with the Practice of his *Spiritual* and *Moral*, as well as his Ceremonial Law.

And are there not many Christians as faulty as the *Jews* were? For do not those of the *Romish* Perswasion undertake long Pilgrimages, and undergo many severe Mortifications, to atone God's Anger? Do not they apply themselves to the Practice of the
Exter-

Externals of Religion, with great Care and Pains; and value themselves extraordinarily on these Performances? Nay, do not many of those of the Reformed Religion rest too much satisfy'd with Religion of the *Means*, and neglect its substantial Duties, which are, Religion of the *End*; that which God chiefly and mainly designed they should perform. Many of them are constant in hearing of Sermons, in frequenting of Prayers, at their private as well as publick Devotions; and that with Zeal, and a commendable Affection; some of them Fast often, meditate on God's Word, and receive the Sacrament frequently. And who can say but that all this is the necessary Duty of a Christian? But, O *Christian Man*, God hath shewn thee, that this is not *all* that he requires of thee; and that although this is *good*, yet it is not the *chief* nor the main Good he hath commanded; for although these are *not* to be left *undone*, yet Justice, Mercy, and Humility, is what *ought to be done* by thee, after the most punctual, and the most exact Manner.

I would not be mistaken; I do not go about to lessen your Obligation to Prayer, or other of these Instrumental Duties of Religion; for without doubt they are necessary to be constantly and zealously perform'd, and the wilful Neglect of them is a damnable *Impiety*: But my Intention is to shew you, with the Prophet, that they are not the *principal*

cial Thing; and that inward Holiness, consisting in the Heart and Affections, and demonstrating itself by outward Actions, in the performance of our *whole Duty* towards God, our Neighbour, and our Selves, is that which God prefers before the other; they are both *necessary* to Salvation, but *in their due* Places, Degrees, and Order; and the former will not be accepted without the latter. For a Man may be a Hypocrite to himself, as well as to others; and be deceived by his own Conscience, as well as deceive others; and Men may sometimes imagine themselves to be nearest Heaven, when they are farthest off it, and may think that their zealous Performance of *one lesser Duty*, may commute for their Neglect of *those* which are *greater*. For a Man may pray with great Zeal, and fast long; and yet have all the while unmortified Passions. He may lift up his Eyes to Heaven, and have his Heart all the while grovelling upon the Earth; and be a severe Observer of the Sabbath, and defraud his Neighbour all the Week following. *But God hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good,*

First, In *General*.

Secondly, In *Particular*.

For the Prophet in these Words gives us a short Epitome of the *Whole Duty of Man*; which

which he at first lays down in general, under the Notion of *Good*, or Right; and then proceeds to specify, and particularize the several Branches of it.

He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good : He hath clearly deliver'd, and manifestly declar'd in his Laws of Nature, and in his Holy Scriptures, what is the Good which he requires of thee ; and thou need'st not be at any great trouble to attain the Knowledge of it : Do but what plain Scripture and clear Reason dictate unto thee ; and thou may'st please God, without being at the Expence of costly Sacrifices. And what is that which he requires ? but, first, that thou behave thy self as a Rational Creature, and a *Man* ought to do ; and not to behave thy self like a *Beast* before God. It is the Eternal Laws of Good and Right, that are to be thy first Guide and Directors ; and the Rules which God has engraven upon thy Mind, which are to be the Model and Square of thy Actions. For it is *Reason* which makes thee a *Man*, and distinguishes thee from other Creatures ; and all the other parts of thy Nature, are common to thee with the Brutes that perish : For he that acts contrary to Reason, is not a Man, but a Beast ; he changes his Nature, and degrades himself into an inferior rank of Beings.

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The intemperate Person is a Swine, rather than a Man; he returns to his Vomit like a Dog, and as a Sow wallows in the Mire: And the Adulterer is liken'd to feed Horses in the Morning, by the Prophet, for their unruly, and their unbribled Lust. What is the revengeful Person, the Fierce and the Cruel, but a Wolf in Sheeps-cloathing; a Man indeed in outward Shape; but a Tiger, or a Lion in his Temper and Disposition; sometimes as irrational, and often less generous than they. From whence it is that the Scripture calls the Sinner, the fleshly Man; as it does the unrenew'd Person, barely the animal, or natural Man. And yet Nature may go very far. A Pagan Philosopher, guided only by the Light of Nature, bids the Person who would direct his Ways aright, to act in all Things *like a Man*: Eat and Drink *as becomes a Man*, who is a rational Creature; Sleep no longer than will suffice Nature, as Nature dictates unto thee; and do all things as a *Man*: Thereby intimating that if he did otherwise, he would forfeit that noble Character. For a Man ought to live not according to Sense, and Opinion, which is proper to the foolish and ignorant; or according to his brutish Inclinations, and irregular Passions, which is the property of a Beast; but according to the Light of Reason, the Candle which

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God hath set up in his Heart; and then he will hate and fly from Vice; which is altogether Brutish and Unreasonable. Even the Practice of this one good natural Precept, Do as you would be done by, will conduct a Man through the greatest Part of his Duty; and will direct him in the two first Branches of what God requires of him.



SERMON



SERMON XVII.

To Do as you would be Done by.

M I C A H VI. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good;
and what doth the Lord require of thee?
but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God.*



Have already insisted on these Words as far as they respect what God requires of Man in *general*, under the Notion of *Good* or Right; He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is *Good*; and shall now proceed to consider the several Branches of that general *Good* which he hath shewed Man, and requires of him, which are Three.

First, To do *Justly*.

Secondly, To *love Mercy*.

Thirdly, To *walk Humbly with our God*.

To do *Justly*, respects our Duty towards our Neighbour in Point of Dealing; and consists in the giving of every one their Due,

Superiors, Equals, and Inferiors; and in not oppressing any, or defrauding them; but in dealing with them as to their Persons, Estates, and good Names, as we our selves would be dealt with.

To be *Merciful*, comprehends all which Charity requires of a Man, and especially of a Christian, beyond what strict Justice may demand. For the Christian who does no more than the Strictness and Rigour of Justice may exact, is arrived but to an ordinary pitch of Christianity, which requires that a Man be Kind, Pitiful, and full of Compassion towards others; and that with a willing and a chearful Mind, and without expecting any Recompence from them, as the Word *Love Mercy* imports.

To *walk humbly with God*, is to have a lively Sense of God's Presence always upon our Souls; and to seek to approve our selves to him in all Things; and that in all *Humility*; that is, without murmuring and disputing his Commands; and in a patient doing and suffering what he shall inflict upon us.

Justice chiefly respects Dealings and Contracts; and I think a Man may safely guide himself in those Matters by these following particular Directions, which are agreed upon not only by Divines, but by Men of Understanding in civil Affairs, and the Laws of Nature and Nations.

(1.) We are to Do to others as we would be done by, in all instances which are not plainly sinful or unreasonable; that is, which it is not sinful to do, or unreasonable to omit. As a Man may not therefore kill another by virtue of this Rule, when he is weary of his own Life, because Murther is in it self unlawful; and a Judge must not omit to condemn a Malefactor because he would be unwilling to be condemned if he were in the Malefactor's stead; and that because the Omission of publick Justice is in it self unreasonable.

(2.) Put thy self in thy Neighbour's stead, and him in thy own; make thy self the Seller in Buying, and the Buyer in Selling; and then thou wilt keep a Conscience void of Offence, and be upright in thy Dealings.

(3.) A Man may demand, and in Justice expect a lawful Gain, or a valuable Consideration; because Trade is the transferring of our Rights in a Thing to another, upon a proportionable Compensation for it. And that is a reasonable Compensation, or a lawful Gain, which is universally best, and mutually so for the Buyer as well as the Seller; and with respect to the publick Good as well as our own. The Man who considers not the publick Good, cares not how dearly he Sells, or how cheaply he Buys: and therefore it is highly reasonable, that this inordinate Desire should be regulated by the

common Good of Society; which requires that such a Proportion should be observ'd which is equally Good to *both*; which is founded upon this plain Reason grounded upon Self-Interest; because the Advantage which is made by immoderate Gain, whilst I am the Seller, will be equally prejudicial to me when I am the Buyer.

(4.) That Gain may be accounted mutually and universally best for all Men, which allows a reasonable Profit for Mens Time, Pains, and Skill; the Hazard they are at; the Usefulness of their Callings; and the Difficulty there is in attaining to Knowledge in them; together with the Consideration of other Circumstances, as Prudence and Conscience shall direct.

(5.) That is a lawful Gain, or a reasonable Compensation, which is generally accounted so by the most honest and most knowing Persons of each Trade or Profession; or which is the ordinary and usual Price amongst conscientious and skilful Men of the same Profession, whose general and concurring Practice is the Standard of Commerce; except there be some general Injustice in the Mystery of the Profession it self, generally practised, or too commonly encouraged, or at least winkt at. In which Case, although it be not altogether in the Power of every particular Person to remedy the Mischief; yet something, I presume, may
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be done by all towards it; and very much by Men of Authority, Interest, Ability, Skill, and Credit in their particular Arts and Professions, who would do a noble Work to set themselves about the remedying or discouraging such publick Mischiefs; and it is the necessary Duty of all Men to practise strict Honesty, and endeavour after the highest Justice they are able to practise in the imperfect State and Condition of Things the World is now in. God knows my Heart, I accuse no particular Person, nor reflect upon any Trade or Profession: but only suppose such Things as may possibly be, and are said to be too commonly practis'd.

(6.) It is a Truth grounded upon Reason, and agreed upon by the common Consent of Mankind, that lawful Gain doth not consist in one certain indivisible nice Point; but that there is Latitude in it, and several Degrees of it, in which if a Man keeps himself, he may use his Skill and Prudence in Bargaining, and make the best he can of his Commodities, without the Imputation of Injustice. He who sells for the utmost lawful Value, is not Unrighteous; he who sells for a moderate Price, is an upright honest Man, and a just Dealer; he who contents himself with the lowest Gains, is a good Man, and a conscientious Christian; but he who exceeds the utmost common Latitude of lawful Gain is unjust. And what is that, but

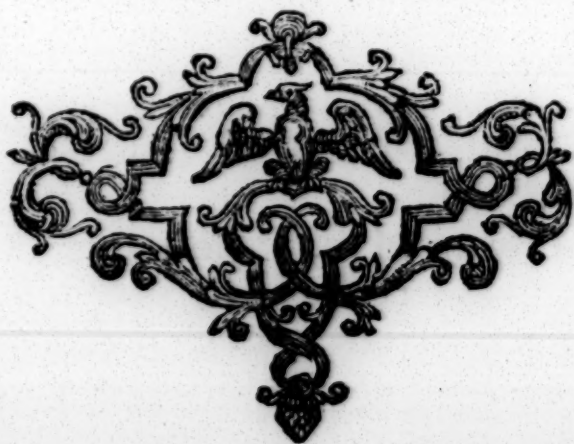
to be one who breaks the eternal Rules of Justice, who dissolves, as much as in him lies, the common Bands of humane Society; breaks the Laws of Nature and of God, as well as of Man; defeats the common End for which Men combin'd into Societies; entails the Hatred of honest Men, and the Cries and Curses of the Poor upon himself, and upon his Posterity; and hath all the while been so unwise, as to make no Friends to himself with his unrighteous Mammon. And what will he then do when he begins to fail; when Death approaches and summons him before God's Tribunal, when that dreadful Sentence sounds in his Ears, *Let him that is unjust, be unjust still*: the Time of Repentance is past, thou art given up to thy own Lusts; thou would'st not be reclaimed, and now thou canst not, there is not Time for thee, nor Grace afforded to work out thy Salvation; and thou who hast dealt unmercifully with others, shall be dealt with severely by God; for the same Measure thou hast meeted withal, shall be measured unto thee again. God indeed is infinite in Goodness towards Sinners; but he is always Just, and sometimes Severe; and that for the Good of Sinners; that many may be reclaim'd by some severe Examples upon a few. The Apostle bids us take notice of the *Severity* as well as of the *Goodness* of Almighty God; and of all Men, the unjust Man may most expect

pect the Effects of it. For what can the unmerciful Oppressor, who grinds the Face of the Poor, and defrauds the Orphan, and the Widow, expect at God's Hands, but the just Reward of his own unmerciful Dealings, a severe Punishment proportion'd to his own Offence? Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right? And is it not just, right, and equitable, that he who shews no Mercy, should have no Mercy shewn unto him? When thou art upon thy Death-bed, Conscience, if it be not quite stifled and hardened by Sin, will then accuse thee of thy Injustice; and thou would'st with the like Perplexity with the *Jews* in the Words before my Text, part with all thy outward worldly Goods for Peace of Conscience, and an honest upright Heart. Wherewithal shall I come before God, wilt thou then say, what shall I do to please him; what shall I part with; will my ill-gotten Goods suffice to atone God's Anger; I will part with them, and give not only Fourfold, but all which I have, for my Transgressions; and the Fruit of all my Labours, Craft, and Care, for the Sin of my Soul.

But, O vain Man, these Lane, Sick, and Death-bed Sacrifices will not suffice; for God hath shewn unto thee, and thou might'st have consider'd during the past time of thy Life, that nothing but Justice, Mercy, and Piety, will be accepted by him, and either

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a humble Life led according to the Precepts in my Text, or at least a Heart effectually wrought upon to the undertaking of them, is the only Ground of Assurance which can be safely relied upon; the latter of which yet is very difficult to be known, and to be obtain'd. Thou therefore who would'st Die well, oughtest to Live well too, and not to put off thy Repentance until thy Death-bed, because Grace is not often bestowed upon Sinners, who defer to ask for it till the last Gasp; and thou canst not tell whether it will prove effectual or no. But learn betimes to know what is good, and live Justly, love Mercy, and walk humbly before thy God; and thou wilt be blessed with his Grace here, and with him in Eternal Glory hereafter.



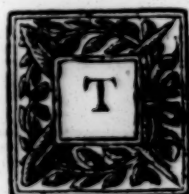


SERMON XVIII.

Of Walking humbly with God.

MICAH VI. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is Good,
and what doth the Lord require of thee?
but to do Justly, to love Mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God.*



THESE Words contain an Abstract of the *whole Duty*, which God requires of us; consisting in Acts of Justice and Mercy towards our Neighbours; and in an humble demeanour of our selves towards God. I have already dispatch'd the Two first of them. I shall now, through God's Assistance, briefly shew what is meant in Scripture by *walking humbly with God*.

Religion in Scripture is resembled to a *Way*; and *walking* in it, signifies continuing in it as in a Course or Way of Life, that so we may arrive to Eternal Happiness, the End of it. And consequently *walking with God* denotes in general, the ordering of a Man's Conversation, or Course of Life with respect to him, according

according to his Commands; so as to do what is well pleasing in his Sight.

(1.) Particularly to walk with God, signifies to live *as in God's Presence*, with an awful Sense of his Majesty, Justice, Power, and Holiness upon our Mind; with an earnest and ardent Desire of pleasing him, and an humble Fear of offending him. *I have set the Lord always before me* (saith the Psalmist, *Pf. 16. 8.*) *because he is at my right Hand, I shall not be moved.* He continually meditated upon the Omniscience, and Omnipresence of the Great God; acknowledging him to know all Things, and to be present in all Places; and therefore he knew that he should *not be moved*; that he should not be overborn by Temptations; be overcome by Troubles, or shaken in his Obedience to him. To suppose our selves to be always in God's Presence, and to be overlook'd by his all-seeing and watchful Eye, is one of the surest Means to restrain our selves from Evil. For if Men are deterred from their wicked Enterprize by the Presence of those, who have any Power or Authority over them, who will detect their Faults, or can bring them to Punishment for them; how much more would they be kept from Sin, if they did but consider that God overlook'd their Actions? There is so much of natural Shame and Fear left in Mankind, that few will venture upon some Sorts of Sins, if there be but

a possibility of being known and detected; Men seek the Night and Darknefs to cover their Wickednefs, and are afraid lest the Noife, or Whisper should betray them. And is there not juft Reason for it; for hath not a *Bird of the Air* (as the Wife Man expreffes it) fometimes carry'd the Voice; and hath not that which hath Wings told the Matter? *i. e.* hath not Murther, Treafon, and fome fuch like Sins, been discover'd as fuddenly and as ftrangely, as if the very Birds of the Air had overheard the Confultation; had feen the Murther committed, and had flown with their utmoft Swiftnefs to discover it. And are there not fome Sins, which thou wilt not difcourfe of in thy own Bed-chamber; and can'ft fcarce entruft with thy own Thoughts, lest they should be discover'd by Men; and wouldft thou venture upon them without the leaft Fear, and recoil of Confcience before God? It is certainly for want of belief, that he knoweth, and feeth all things; or for want of fetting him always before thee, that thou fallest into fuch great Sins. The ftrange Discoveries of Murthers, and of the moft fecret Sins; and thy own natural Fears, which thou carriest about thee, will not permit thee to doubt, whether there be a Providence or no; for thou can'ft not fhake off the Fears of another World, and of a future Punifhment; it will haunt thofe who fear not Men; and perplex the Thoughts
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of the most powerful Potentates, whilst they are surrounded with their Guards, and raised above the fear of Humane Laws and Punishments. It must be therefore for want of due Consideration of this great Truth, and from not living as in God's Sight, that thou dost do that before him, which thou wouldst not venture upon before a young Child, or the most faithful of thy Friends or Servants. The Eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the Evil, and the Good; they are upon the Ways of Man, and he seeth all his Goings; and there is no Darkness, nor Shadow of Death, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves, *Prov. 15. Job 34. 21.* And cannot Man go away from God's Spirit, or flee from his Presence; why then should he not live as in his Presence, and walk as before him? Thou compasseth our Paths, and art acquainted with all our Ways, there is not a Word in our Tongues but thou knowest it, and thou understandest our Thoughts afar off. Thou knowest what our Thoughts will be before we have form'd them in our own Minds; because thou knowest them from all Eternity. Thou formedst all the Springs and Motions of our Souls, and knewest how, when, and after what manner they would be determined. And can we then think to hide any thing from thee, or to convey our selves out of thy Presence? No, Lord, we desire to live and walk before thee;
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and O let us never go out from thy Presence; for then we shall, like *Cain*, be Fugitives and Vagabonds upon the Earth, and we shall be banished from thy Favour, and thy more immediate Presence in Glory, to Eternal Darkness, and the lowest Hell, where thou also art to punish us.

(2.) To walk with God, is to *live by Faith* in God and Christ; There is a Life of Sense and Unbelief, when Men live according to the Suggestions of their fleshly Lusts, and in the Gratification of their Senses; without advancing from Things seen, to Things that are not seen; and in such an adherence to the Things of this present World, as to be fixt to them; so that they never raise their Souls above them, by lively Apprehensions of a better World, and by conquering their Inclinations to Things below. To live a Life of Faith in God, is to live as those who have taken him for their Creator, their Lord, their Owner, their Ruler, their Benefactor, and who have accordingly given themselves up unto him by Self-resignation to his Will, and by Subjection to his Laws; to be healed, ruled, perfected, and saved by him. He who lives by Faith in God, lives in a Dependence upon him, acknowledges his Being to be Originally of him, and that it flows by continual Emanations from him; he has the firmest Belief of him, the highest Love for him, the greatest Trust in him, and the most absolute

folute Resignation to him; he entirely lives to his Glory, and whether he Eats, and Drinks, and whatsoever he does, he ultimately designs his Honour, and makes all his worldly Interests and Pleasures be subordinate to this End.

(3.) To walk with God, is to live in the *Practice* of all those Duties which he hath commanded. *Noah* was Just and *Perfect*, and *walked with God*; *Walk before me* (saith God to *Abram*) and be thou *perfect*; where Justice, and Righteousness, and an unblameable Course of Life, is made to be the Sign of walking with God; that is, of walking in the same Path with him, by being Holy, as he is Holy; and by making Him, and his Laws, the Example, Rule, and Pattern of our Actions; and going on so steadily in the Ways of Godliness, as if he had upholden us with his Right Hand; had sometimes gone before to trace out the Way for us; and had sometimes led, guided, and conducted us. Make thy Way plain before my Face, says Holy *David*, and lead me, O Lord, in thy Righteousness; Guide me by thy Holy Spirit; Walk with me, that I may walk with thee; not only shew me thy Ways, but keep me in them. For then doth a Man walk with God, when it appears by the Holiness of all his Actions, that he is under the Divine Conduct and Protection, that he is assisted by his Spirit, and enjoys a gracious Communion with him.

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To walk *humbly*, implies these Things.

(1.) To frame our Lives and Conversations in all things that respect God with Humility,

1. In our Understanding.

2. In our Actions.

3. In our Sufferings.

(1.) In our *Understandings*; it teaches us in all Things which he hath plainly revealed unto us, to submit and captivate our Understandings, and to bring every proud and high Thought in Subjection unto him. For who art thou, O Man, says the Apostle, that repliest against God; that arguest with him; and that callest the reasonableness of his Proceedings into Question? Dost not thou find, that thy Understanding is finite and limited, that thou knowest but little of what is *before* thee, and nothing of what is *above* thee, but as it is revealed unto thee? and wilt thou deny what thou can'st not but confess he hath revealed unto thee, because thou can'st not fathom the Depths of it? as well may'st thou think to measure the Waters in the hollow of thy Hand; to mete out the Heavens with a Span; to comprehend the Dust of the Earth in a Measure, to weigh the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance. For there

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is a *Pride of Understanding*, as well as *Pride of Life*, which the humble Man avoids as carefully as the former; submitting himself unto God's revealed Will without Murmurs and Disputings; but faith with *Job*, after he contended with God; *Behold, I am Vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my Hand upon my Mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer any more; yea twice, but I will proceed no further. For I have uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Wherefore I abhor my self, and repent in Dust and Ashes.*

(2.) He is humble in his *Actions*. He readily submits to God's Commandments without grudging; works out his Salvation with fear and trembling; and when he has done all, confesses himself to be an unprofitable Servant; and relies only upon God's Mercy, and Christ's Merits. When God lays his Afflictions upon him, he bears the Indignation of the Lord, and with *Job* says, shall we that are sinful Men complain; O let us rather say, I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me, for I have sinned against thee, and my Punishment is less than my Iniquities have deserved.

(3.) He humbles himself under the mighty Hand of God, and in whatsoever he *suffers*, according to his Will, he commits the keeping of his Soul to him in well-doing, as un-
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to a faithful Creator. When he Prays, he abases himself with a profound Humility; when he gives Thanks and praises God, he rejoices before him, but *with Reverence*; when he thinks of God, he is afraid, but with a Fear mixt with Love, a *Filial*, not a Slavish, such a one as encourages him to Duty, and not drives him from it.

He is *Patient* under Evils; thankfully acknowledges the least Benefit, and makes use of it with the greatest Care and Circumspection, that he may have more Graces, and lest he should have that taken from him which he has, for want of due using it.

And if *Justice, Mercy, and humble Piety*, be indispensibly required of us, in order to the pleasing of Almighty God, what will become then of those, who oppress and cheat their Neighbours; who are unmerciful, and uncharitable; who grind the Face of the Poor, and defraud the Widow and the Orphan; who look down upon others with Pride and Disdain; and have not God at all in their Thoughts? Who are implacable upon Injuries and Provocations, entail Enmity upon their Heirs with their Estates; promote Animosities, and Divisions in Church and State; raise groundless Calumnies against Men, and then confidently speak and promote them?

If we did but walk humbly before God, should not we have greater Care of our Selves,

and of our Actions? Why do we pray with so little Zeal and true Affection, but for want of considering the Distance betwixt God and our selves? Why are we irreverent in God's House, and Sit when we should Kneel at Prayer? or carelessly look about us, letting our Eyes rove upon every vain and idle Object, and complementing each other at a Distance, in the midst of those Parts of Divine Worship, in which God alone is to be Adored, or Bowed unto, but for want of bringing humble Hearts along with us; and for not considering the Immensity, and adorable Majesty of the Great God, in whose Presence we are. For, could we else speak to God with less reverence and concern than we do to one another, and permit either Pride, Vanity, or Carelessness to take our Minds off from God? Why is a Man ungrateful for God's Mercies; but because he receives them not with an humble Mind? but is of a proud and haughty Temper, and thinks them to be his due. How dare Men to blaspheme God with Oaths, and horrid Execrations; but because they do not sufficiently attend to the Greatness of God's Majesty, who will have even his very *Name* sanctified and revered by us; and because they proudly contemn that God, whom Angels adore? Why does the Drunkard wallow in Intemperance, and the Luxurious Man abandon himself to his Lusts; but for want of an humble regard to
 God's

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God's Omnipresence, who seeth and knoweth all Things?

We have now an Occasion to exercise Mercy; let us shew that we truly love it, and contribute to the Wants of our distressed Brethren, with a ready Heart: For if we would please God, if we would come before him after an acceptable Manner; we are to make our Offerings to the Poor, who are his Receivers; and then we may expect the Blessing of God upon our Endeavours, and that He, to whom we have lent a few Pence, will repay us with many Talents of Grace here, and Glory hereafter





SERMON XIX.

Of *Enoch's* Walking with God.

GEN. V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.



WE have in these Words an Account of the Translation of one of the ancient Patriarchs of the old World, into a better State with God in Heaven; and the Character, and Testimony, which the Holy Penman gives him; upon the Account of which God took him to himself, and he was not. He was not any more seen upon Earth, nor were any remains of him interr'd amongst the Graves of his Ancestors; He did not Depart as others did, by a separation of Soul from Body; but he was caught up unto God in his entire Person, to be Happy with him in his Heavenly Paradise. He saw not Death, and was not found, because God had translated him, as he afterwards did *Elijah*, into Heaven. And this God was graciously pleased to do, to give the
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the wicked Generation in which he lived, a sensible and lively Testimony of another Life, and the Generations to come, a Type of the living Saints being caught up to Christ at the last Day, to be with him for ever.

In the time of *Enoch*, who was translated about a thousand Years after the Creation, the World was overspread with all manner of Wickedness; and Men being corrupted with Ease and Luxury, gave themselves up to Sin and Impiety; so that the Earth was corrupt before God, and filled with Violence; and they Eat and Drank, Married, and were given in Marriage; that is, minded chiefly the Affairs and Pleasures of this World, without having God in their Thoughts; the Imaginations of their Hearts being only Evil continually.

Into such Degrees of Impiety may Mankind fall, if they throw off their Dependence upon their Creator, and live without a Sense of God upon their Minds; giving themselves up to the swing of their Passions, and the gratification of their corrupt Inclinations. But God, who has in every Age afforded some extraordinary Testimony of himself, and his Providence, was pleased in this, amongst many others, to order Things so, as that the Men of this wicked Generation could not but be convinced, that there was another World, and that a better, by seeing so pious a Person as *Enoch* was, taken out of it, by

an extraordinary and very surprizing manner; and that in his Youth, and the Flower of his Age, according to the term of the Age of Man at that Time; when the Earth before the Deluge, although cursed, was very healthful, beautiful, and fruitful. For surely, might they say, if he, who hath walked so as to please God, be taken so soon from this pleasant Earth, which with no great toil affords us all things that our Hearts can wish, there must be some better Country, some better Rewards for pious souls. And seeing that he was taken up after an unusual and unaccountable Manner, there must be some invisible Power above us which hath done this; and the God whom he served (whom we cannot deny, although we serve him not) must have taken him to himself from this wicked Generation. And why should he be taken up alive, if there were not another Life? For that Circumstance ought to convince us that there is one. For the working of these and such like Convictions in their Minds, did God afford them this powerful, and sensible Proof of his Providence, and another Life; which yet, as the sacred History assures us, had but little Influence upon that degenerate Age; for the Wickedness of Man soon increased so, as that God repented that he had made him. And has not God afforded our Age many great and surprizing Providences; and are not we as stupid and in-

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inconsiderate as they were under them? Do not we also disregard the Works of the Lord, and take little Notice of the Operations of his Hands? Did not the Tongue of a prophane Swearer, not long ago, rot in his Mouth, in our very Neighbourhood, and are not Oaths as frequent as they were before? Do not departing Atheists confess that there is a God, do not they believe, and tremble? And yet do not Men industriously seek all Ways and Means to baffle such Convictions? And how willing are they to divert the uneasy Thoughts of Divine Vengeance, which they cannot but be convinced of, in the midst of their prophane Mirth and riotous Diversions? *Hi sunt qui trepidant, & ad omnia fulgura pallent.* Believe it, such Men are most afraid of God, who seek most to believe there is none, and who strive to divert such Thoughts by Intemperance, or Pleasures.

But (Secondly) we have in these Words, the Character the Holy Penman gave this good Person, upon the Account of which God translated him: *Enoch walked with God.* Whence I proceed to shew, when we may be said to *walk with God*, or to be Followers of God, as *Enoch* was; who therefore before his Translation had this Testimony, *that he pleased God.* And so also may we.

(First,) When the Perfections of God have made such Impressions upon our Souls, as that
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uitable Perfections are produced in us. For as the Seal by its Impression produces the like Figure on the Wax, which is of a pliable nature to receive it; so doth the Spirit, by the frequent consideration of God's Perfections, impress the Divine Image on our Souls, if they are prepared by an honest Heart, and a teachable humble Disposition, to receive it. As for Example:

(1.) In General, when the Soul is so persuaded of the transcendent infinite Being of God, the inexhaustible Fountain of Being, as that he looks upon himself, and all the World, as upon nothing without God, as nothing in comparison with him; and disregards all other things, when they stand in Competition with him: For as the Sun obscures the Light of a Candle, so doth the Presence of God in the Soul, darken the seeming Lustre and Brightness of the greatest Excellencies, Pleasures, and Allurements here below; forcing it to cry out with the Psalmist, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and whom have I upon Earth, that I can desire in Comparison with thee? And with devout *Hannah*, in her rapturous Song of Thanksgiving, There is none Holy as the Lord; there is none besides him; there is no other God but him; and all things are as nothing in comparison with him.

(2.) When the Consideration of God's Unity, Simplicity, and Invisibilty draws the Soul off from the many distracting Vanities
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of the World, to be at unity within it self, by concentring all its Thoughts, Cares, and Concerns in God, the only Center of Unity, in which the Soul can rest. For God is one, but the World hath many contrary Objects, which draw the Soul contrary Ways, and so divide it, and by consequence trouble and distract it, stirring up in it a Variety of contrary Passions, which cannot be satisfied.

But when the Soul contracts it self, and has but one Object, God who is One, to consider, love, and obey; then it is at Peace within it self; it finds but God and his Will predominant and prevalent within it self; it hath only one Master to obey, God, and not the dividing, distracting Mammon; One thing necessary, and not the many worldly things, with which *Martha* was troubled; and it loveth and carefully endeavoureth after Unity and Peace with all Men for God's sake, whose Image they bear, and who hath commanded all Christians to love as Brethren. It thirsts with longing, restless Thoughts, and unsatisfied Desires after perfect Unity in Heaven, where God is all in all. For as a Stone never rests, until it fall to the Earth its Center; and as the Creatures are restless until they attain their Centers, in which they have the perfection of their Being; so is the Soul uneasie in the present imperfect Enjoyments of God, whose Presence to it in this World, is a kind of an
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Absence from it, in comparison to that which it will enjoy in the other.

When the Consideration of God's Wisdom makes us study and labour to know his Will, and take him to be our Master and Teacher; and the Consideration of his Goodness, in Conjunction with that of his Wisdom, raises high, strong, and prevailing Desires and Endeavours in us of pressing forwards towards the highest Degrees of Perfection; of being renewed in the Spirits of our Minds, in true Knowledge and Righteousness, after the Image of him that created us; of being holy as he is holy, pure as he is pure, perfect as he is perfect. Ah! what a Heavenly Life is this, to have God, who is the Glory and Happiness of Heaven, always before us, as a Pattern and Example of our Life and Conversation; and daily to be transformed into his Image, by receiving lively Impressions from him. As Light in our Eyes, and Sounds and Harmony in our Ears, not in their Substances, but by the Impressions they make upon our Senses; so is God in Holy Minds, by Impressions of Holy Dispositions, and Tempers of Mind, wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, through the Consideration of the Divine Perfections, as they are made known to us in Nature and Scripture, and the Life of our Blessed Saviour, the Brightness of God's Glory, and the express Image of his Person.

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And if a Christian is thus to walk with God, if he intends to see him in Glory; what manner of Men then ought all of us to be, in all Holiness of Conversation? How careful, how watchful, how circumspect, drawing off our Senses and Minds from the Vanities and Follies of this World, which we renounced in Baptism, to the Conversation and Imitation of the living God; adding to our Faith Virtue, to our Virtue Knowledge, to our Knowledge, Temperance to our Temperance Patience, and to our Patience Godliness; that so being Partakers of the Divine Nature, an Entrance may be administered unto us abundantly in the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus.

And now you have an Opportunity to shew that you *Walk with God*, in exercising that Part of Practical Godliness which relates to God's House of Prayer, which as they are not to be *made*, so neither are they to look like *Dens of Thieves*; like wast, ruinous Places. So may *this House of God*, in which we are at present assembled, arise out of those Ruins which encompass and deface it; and arrive to the Beauty of that *External Holiness*, or separation to Holy Uses, which it is capable of: But especially may we (together with those who have requested our Charity) arrive to the Beauty of *Internal Holiness*, and *Walk humbly with God* so here, as that we may *sit down* with Him in perfect Rest to all Eternity hereafter.



S E R M O N XX.

The Spiritual Combat.

G E N. XXXII. 24, 25, 26.

And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a Man with him, until the breaking of the Day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his Thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's Thigh was out of Joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the Day breaketh ; And he said, I will not let thee go except thou blest me.



IN this very remarkable Passage of Holy Writ, there are these three Things chiefly to be consider'd:

First, Who it was that wrestled with *Jacob*.

Secondly, In what this Conflict consisted. And Lastly, What was the Issue and Design of it.

And (*1st*,) It was God that wrestled with *Jacob*

Jacob in a human Shape, who is therefore called a Man, at the 24th Verse, and God, at the 30th.

(2dly,) It was a real Conflict, but such a one as was attended with, as well as signified unto us a Spiritual one; a Wrestling by Faith, Prayer, strong crying and Tears, zealous and persevering Endeavours: As appears from *Hosea*, Chap. 12th, Verse 3,—5.

(3dly,) The Design of this Conflict was, to exercise *Jacob's* Faith, holy Fortitude, and Perseverance, and to shew us what ought to be the Behaviour of every faithful Combatant under Afflictions, Trials, and Temptations; and the End and Issue of it was, that *Jacob's* Thigh was out Joynt, and that yet he prevail'd with God, and obtain'd a Blessing. The Hollow of his Thigh was out of Joynt to humble him, and to make him sensible of the *Power* of him that wrestled with him, and of his *own Weakness*. The Dislocation of that Part, by the touch of a Hand, must be effected by no ordinary Strength, it being so fenced and guarded by Nature; upon which *Jacob* began to perceive, by the Violence with which he was assaulted, that it was no *ordinary* Man that wrestled with him, but Christ the Angel of the Covenant in a human Shape; whereupon, in a profound Abasement and Acknowledgment of his own Weakness, he alter'd the manner of his Conflict with him; and from *Bodily* wrestling,

ling, betook himself to *Spiritual*; and instead of employing the force of his Arms and of his Reins in the Conflict, he poured forth Tears, and earnest Prayer, and Supplications (as the Prophet *Hosea* interprets the Place) and strove not so much for Victory as a Blessing from him. He did not let him go indeed, but laid fast hold on him; not so much to wrestle with him, as to be embraced by him with his everlasting Arms of Love and Pity, thereby to draw a Blessing from him; which he sought earnestly with Faith, Prayers, humble Confidence, and Tears; and thereby, contrary to the Success of his Brother *Esau*, he obtain'd the Blessing he sought for. For these Words, *I will not let thee go*, being joined with Supplications, Tears, and a Request of a Blessing, are a Kind of an affectionate Prayer mix'd with Faith, and an Acknowledgment that the Blessing was not of his own obtaining, but of Grace from him he wrestled with; it was a free Gift, and Blessing given by him, who had Strength to foil him, put all his Bones out of Joint, and crush him into Nothing; but yet nevertheless not to be obtained but upon Prayer, and persevering in it. For what other Way is there left for sinful, feeble, impotent Creatures to wrestle with, and to obtain Blessings from their all-powerful Creator, offended Lord, and just Judge. This God hath shewn us, by ordering human Nature, and the Passions of it,

it, after such a Manner, that the most proud Tyrants, and most haughty Conquerors; the most unjust Judges, and the most covetous, hard-hearted Wretches shall be often soonest wrought, upon by humble Submissions, or importunate Supplications; to teach us, that nothing can withstand the Importunity of Prayers; and that if the unjust Judge will avenge the wronged Widow, who by continual Importunity had wearied him; and the covetous Miser will rise out of his Bed to give to him that needeth, when his continual Clamours awake and molest him; much more will our Heavenly Father give to them that ask him, by praying always, and not fainting. And from this Passage it may be further usefully observed, that as he became sensible of the Divine Power of him who wrestled with him, from his Thigh being out of Joint by a *bare touch*, which was a Thing beyond the Power of Humane Strength; so that after his Thigh-bone was restor'd to its proper Place (as it must needs be, because immediately after he pass'd over *Penuel*, Verse 31. on foot, and came safe and whole, *Chap.* 33. 18. as the Words may be understood, to *Shechem*) that yet he halted upon his Thigh, to humble him, and to make him sensible of his own Weakness; and that he might be put in Mind of this extraordinary Mercy.

From whence you may observe, that Halting upon the Thigh may remain, after a Di-

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vine and a miraculous Cure of it, for many wise Reasons; and that there is no Ground from hence to deny, the late Cure of a Halting Maid to be extraordinary, and more immediately from God (for by what Power else could it be done after so long a Dislocation?) although some small Imperfection, and halting may remain, perhaps for the foremention'd Reason, or such like; and perhaps too, that (according to such like Judgments frequently denounced in Scripture) they who wilfully shut their Eyes against the Truth, may be blinded.

I take this Circumstance to be very remarkable, and that it may serve also to justify that great Observation of a Wise Man, that there are few extraordinary and remarkable Occurrences in the World, for which there is not some judged Case, or Parallel in Scripture, although not often seen, but by humble Enquirers into it.

But to proceed: The God-Man who wrestled with him, demanded his Name; not as if he were ignorant of it, but to excite his Attention, and to take Occasion from thence, of bestowing on him the Blessing he had asked. Thy Name shall be no more called *Jacob*, that is, thou shalt no more be principally and chiefly taken notice of, and remarkable for the Action of *supplanting* thy Brother (which is the import of the Word *Jacob*) but thou shalt be famous, and in renown amongst Men,
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for that as a *Prince* thou hast *prevailed* with God in this Conflict, and shalt prevail over thy Brother *Eſau*; which is the import of the Word *Israel*: From whence the Church, when in *Affliction* is call'd *Jacob*; but when in a State of *Conquest* and *Prosperity*, is called *Israel* in Scripture. And as he comforted him thus by Words, so that God (who when he hath torn will heal us, when he hath smitten will bind us up, *Hos. 6. 1.*) who had bruised and broken him by Afflictions, and sore Trials, *blessed* him at the 29th Verse; that is, granted him his request of prevailing against his Brother; protected him in the Time of the greatest Danger; confirmed his former Blessings, and Promises; comforted him under his Distress; encreased his Graces; enlightned, and guided his Understanding into the mysterious and spiritual Meaning of this Conflict; and strengthen'd him against the Temptations he was to meet with in the following Course of his Life.

You have, my beloved Brethren, in this Mysterious Passage (to sum up the whole for your better Edification) an Example and Pattern of a faithful Christian Combatant in this Holy Patriarch *Jacob*; who separated himself from his Family, and retired in private to pray for Divine Assistance against an approaching Danger; to teach us that we must sometimes withdraw our selves from the World, and the Hurry, and even the

necessary Business of it, to commune with God in private, and implore his Blessings upon us.

From his *Conflict*, and the sudden *Surprize* of the Assault, the usual *Surprize* of great *Judgments* and *Temptations* is to be observed, and the Condition Christians are to be in in this World; in which, although all are not always actually engaged in Warfare, at the same time; yet all are to be in readiness, lest they be surprized; and all are enrolled and listed under Christ's Banner. Of a *sudden*, when thou thinkest least of it, the evil Day will oft surprize thee; and when thou art retired to pray more ardently, and meditate more attentively upon God's Goodness; then when thou thinkest to serve God most, and to employ thy Thoughts with the greatest Vigor and Affection, God will sometimes permit thee to be tempted; to try thee; to exercise thee; to reward thee more abundantly; and to teach thee that thou must *always watch*, lest thou fall into Temptation.

Again, our Christian Conflict is like that of *Jacob's*, because as it is in the Design and Intent of God, it is only a Wrestling, in Trial of the Strength of our Reins, and of our Hearts, of our Zeal, and Christian Fortitude; and that although we are now in Heaviness through manifold Temptations, and are try'd as it were by Fire, yet all this is de-

designed by God, that we might be found to his Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. *Jacob* whilst he was in *Padan-Aram* endured much Trouble and many Afflictions, for Twenty long Years; in *the Day the Drought consumed him, and the Frost by Night, and his Sleep departed from his Eyes.* At last God saw his Affliction, and the Labour of his Hands, and deliver'd him from his Trouble; and yet immediately after all, whilst he was travelling to the promised Land, he meets with new Trials; to teach us, what we are to expect in our Pilgrimage to our promised Rest; one Wave of Sorrow and Trouble, will continually beat upon another; and perhaps a Storm may overtake us and threaten us with Shipwrack, even when we are in sight of the Harbour; and after all, we may be saved, but so as by Fire; with great Difficulty, and with the loss of many Degrees of Glory. But as in this History, as in a sacred Emblem, we see our Danger; so have we also here represented our Duty too: *Jacob* when he wrestled, join'd Prayers and Tears to his vehement Endeavours; and had recourse to *them* after *all*; even after he had resisted with so great Courage and Success, as that the Man prevailed not against him; to teach us that our own Strength, and utmost Endeavours, will not prevail, without a Blessing implored from God by Prayer; and that

if we strive never so earnestly, we cannot overcome except we *strive lawfully* (as the Apostle speaks) that is, according to the *Laws* and *Rules* of our Spiritual Combat, instituted by God; by joyning Prayers, and an inward wrestling in Spirit, to our outward Endeavours. The Man who wrestled with *Jacob*, is the same that wrestles with us; a Man, or Creature, in shape and appearance, but God in Truth and Reality; God who sometimes chastises us by *his Creatures*, and sometimes tries and exercises us. *David* when he was cursed by *Shimei*, acknowledged the *Lord's* Hand in it; and when the Pestilence raged in the Land, he straightway looked up to *Heaven*, and saw the Angel of *the Lord* smiting the People. And so do thou good Christian, when thou art afflicted, or visited by Sicknes, look not only to Humane visible Instruments, and natural Remedies; but whilst thou makest use of *them*, be sure first, and chiefly, to humble thy self under the mighty Hand of God, and pour forth thy Soul in Prayers and Tears before him, for the Hardness of thy Heart, which cannot be mollify'd, but by the severer Stroaks of God's Justice; and for thy unruly Passions, which cannot be tamed, but by so harsh a Discipline. *Call upon the Lord in thy Distress*, and *he will hear thee*; hold up thy Hand in Prayer, and Faith, as *Moses* did; and then, like *Joshua*, (*Exod. 17.*) thou may'st conquer

quer *Amaleck*, Sin, Satan, and thy own Lusts. But then thou must be sure to *persevere* in Prayer as *Jacob* did, who wrestled from Evening to break of Day, and *would not let the Man go* until he had blessed him; for *Amaleck* will prevail, if thy Hands be *Heavy*, and thou lettest them down, and doest not keep them steady until the going down of the Sun. Neither must thou despair and give up the Conflict upon every foil, not even if the hollow of thy Thigh be out of Joint with Wrestling; not when thou receivest a severe Stroak and Affliction from God; but thou art to lay hold on God's Mercy through Faith, with the greater Love, and art to cleave close unto him by Faith; saying with a Holy Courage, and Resolution, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. *Job* indeed, and *David*, prayed earnestly that God would remove his Stroak, and withdraw his Hand from them; but these were the Words of Humane Infirmary, when God's Hand was heavy upon them, when they were under the fear of his Anger, and had not time for Grief, to think upon the good Effects of Afflictions, and the Compassions of Almighty God; but at the last, when they had recover'd themselves, they acknowledg'd his Justice, and his Goodness, and their own Impatience, and *David* could say unto God, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* It is necessary, that God *exercise* us with many Conflicts, Trials, and

Afflictions, to make us out of Love with this World, and that we should not set our Hearts too much upon it. And Man is so inclined to abuse Prosperity and good Success, that a great Prince could not but wish for some Stop to the Career of his Victories, to allay and mortify his natural Pride, and to keep him within his due Bounds. As long therefore as we are in this Life, from the Evening-tide of the Night of this World, until the Day-break of the other, we must expect Troubles, and not to have a full Victory over our Temptations; we shall be tempted from within, and from without; and perhaps by falls and relapses into Sin; or by God's Trials, we may go halting, and maimed into the Kingdom of Heaven. But yet howsoever fear not Worm *Jacob*, only be sure to strive lawfully and earnestly, and fight the good fight of Faith with Courage and Resolution; and then thou may'st be sure, that God will uphold thee with his right Hand, that his Eternal Arms will be underneath thee, and that after he hath exercised thee here for some while, he will Eternally reward thee hereafter.

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SERMON XXI.

The Spiritual Combat.

G E N. XXXII. 24, 25, 26.

And Jacob was left alone ; and their wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the Day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his Thigh : and the hollow of Jacob's Thigh was out of Joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, let me go, for the Day breaketh : And he said, I will not let thee go except thou blest me.



GOD, out of his infinite Goodness to Mankind, makes use of various Methods to instruct them ; adding Examples to his Precepts, and teaching them after a familiar manner, in Condescension to the Imperfections of their Capacities. For our Knowledge coming originally from our Senses, what is proposed to them makes deeper and more effectual Impressions upon the generality of Mankind, than the greatest and severest

verest Reasonings. Hence the first Instructors of Mankind made use of visible Symbols, Parables, Emblems, and Hieroglyphicks, to teach their Children; and one of the wisest of the Heathen Nations exposed upon the Stage drunken Persons, in the midst of their frantick Revels and wild Mirth, to the Sight of their Children, to deter them from the like Practices, by the Scandal of the Example represented unto them. Upon the same Reason did the All-wise God institute a Religion made up of sensible visible Representations and Ceremonies amongst the *Jews*, in Condescension to their grosser Capacities; and hath also assured us of his Assistance in our Afflictions, and of our Duty under them, by the most lively Examples, as well as by the most holy Precepts.

Thus God has given us the History of *Job*, that in it (as the Apostle St. *James* speaks) we may see, as in a lively Representation, the Patience and End, or happy Issue of his Sufferings: And hath given us a Cloud of faithful Witnesses and Martyrs, reckoned up in that short Martyrology given by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Heb. 11. But above all, the bright Example of his own Son, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, which we are to look unto, and to consider, lest we be weary and faint in our Minds; for we have not yet resisted unto Blood, striving against Sin. Amongst the faithful Worthies of the old Testament,

stament, there is none whose Example is more Instructive and more Illustrious than that of good old *Jacob*; neither is there any Passage of his whole History more worthy your pious Consideration, than this I have read unto you, in which there are almost as many Mysteries as Words; which the more they are considered, the more wonderful will they appear unto us; as containing an exact Image and Resemblance of the particular Providence of God, in dispensing of Evils and Afflictions; of the Assistance he affords under them; and of our Duty, whilst we are exercised by them; which God designed, not only for the Consolation and Comfort of *Jacob*, when he was in fear of his Brother *Esau*; but also for the Good and Benefit of his Church in all Ages of the World; for whose continual Instruction these Things are written.

The Substance and Occasion of this Passage of Holy Writ was this: *Jacob*, in his return to *Canaan*, from the House of his Father in Law *Laban*, received Advice that his Brother *Esau* came to meet him with a Band of four hundred Men: Upon this, *Jacob* calling to Mind the Hatred his Brother had entertained against him, was greatly afraid and distressed; and to shew us an Example of what ought to be our Behaviour in the like Circumstances, he prays earnestly to God for Deliverance from the Hands of his enraged Brother (as you may read from the 6th to the

the 24th Verse) and joins the use of prudent and honest Means to his Prayers unto him: For he first divided the People that were with him into two Bands, that if the one should be smitten, the other might escape; and then prepared a Present to pacify his Anger, and to mitigate his Displeasure by degrees; he made his Servants to pass over before him with the Gifts of Cattle he designed for him; and to put a space betwixt Drove and Drove (*Verse 16*) that an Occasion might be given to *Eſau*, the better to consider his Brother's Love and Kindness to him; that his Gift might be set off to the greater Advantage; and that the Heat of his Passion might by length of Time be abated. *I will appease him with the Present that goeth before me*, saith *Jacob*. Considerable Instances of Wisdom and Prudence; which Christianity does not forbid, but commands and encourages; provided it do not degenerate into base Craft and Falshood.

When this prudent Man (who was also a *Plain* or upright Man, as he is called in Scripture) had thus provided for the Safety of his Family, and had sent them before him over the Ford *Jabbock*, he remained behind alone, according to the Custom of his Father *Isaac*, who was wont to retire to meditate alone in the Fields at Evening. And *Jacob was left alone*. But they are never alone who have God *with them*; and the most

most retired Solitude is more acceptable to a pious Soul, than the most frequented Cities, in which *Wickedness* dwells.

In this Solitude he was surprized after a most wonderful manner; for on a sudden a Man presents himself unto him, lays hold on him, and wrestles with him until break of Day; notwithstanding which surprize and long strife for Mastery, he at last prevailed over this his eager and powerful Assailant. For (as the Prophet *Hosea* more fully explains some Passages of this short History, *Hos.* 12. 3, 5.) *He that took his Brother by the Heel, by his strength had power with God; yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto Him; because of the Strength of his Faith, the Fervency of his Prayers, his Perseverance under Trials, and his Tears and Supplications unto God. Thus did the loving Correction of the Lord make him great. And thus was Jacob a Type of his Redeemer; who was perfected through Sufferings; and who in the Days of his Flesh offered up Prayers and Supplications, with strong Crying and Tears, and was heard in that he feared.*

From these Words I shall endeavour to deduce many useful and remarkable Observations.

And first, We may observe, that *Jacob* was left *alone*, or tarried alone in a private or retir'd Place, after the whole Company had passed

the 24th Verse) and joins the use of prudent and honest Means to his Prayers unto him: For he first divided the People that were with him into two Bands, that if the one should be smitten, the other might escape; and then prepared a Present to pacify his Anger, and to mitigate his Displeasure by degrees; he made his Servants to pass over before him with the Gifts of Cattle he designed for him; and to put a space betwixt Drove and Drove (*Verse 16*) that an Occasion might be given to *Esau*, the better to consider his Brother's Love and Kindness to him; that his Gift might be set off to the greater Advantage; and that the Heat of his Passion might by length of Time be abated. *I will appease him with the Present that goeth before me, saith Jacob.* Considerable Instances of Wisdom and Prudence; which Christianity does not forbid, but commands and encourages; provided it do not degenerate into base Craft and Falshood.

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From these Words I shall endeavour to deduce many useful and remarkable Observations.

And first, We may observe, that *Jacob* was left *alone*, or tarried alone in a private or retir'd Place, after the whole Company had passed

passed before him over the Brook *Jabbock*. And to what End should he tarry, but to enjoy the Benefit of Privacy, that he might have the greater Freedom for Meditation, and Discourse with God, and his own Soul? For he had dispatched all his worldly Affairs; and it being the Custom of his Father to meditate in the Fields at the Evening Tide, we may very well presume that he tarried alone for this Purpose; the Time of this Retirement being probably in the Evening; because it is said, that the Conflict lasted until the Break of the Day. But howsoever, from this Example, an Evening Retirement for Meditation may very well be recommended unto you; when you should recollect your scatter'd Spirits, and employ their united Force in holy Thoughts, fervent Ejaculations, and devout Prayers, in thanking God for your Deliverance from the Dangers of the past Day, and in committing your selves to his Almighty Protection. To which a Solitary place doth much conduce, that our Thoughts may not be taken off by the diversity of Objects, and we may freely attend upon God without Disturbance, or Interruption; and as the Holy Patriarch *Isaac*, and even our Saviour himself, was wont to retire for Meditation into a solitary Garden, Mountain, or Field, and that often about the Even-tide; so have many devout Persons found the same Time and the like solitary Places to be most suitable for such Exercises.

But

But in this no general and universal Rules can be given; but each Man must be left to his Christian Prudence, in agreement to his Temper and Constitution, to make choice of such Times and Places as he finds best for him, only remembering, that Meditation, and Retirement to secret Prayer, is a Duty incumbent on all Christians; and that he who neglects it, neglects his own Soul, and will never arrive to any Eminence in Gifts and Graces, for want of a vigorous Exercise of the Faculties of the Soul; which cannot have so free Enlargements in Publick as in Private. Do not therefore neglect private Devotion, and satisfy thy self *only* with that which is *publick*; for although the latter hath several Advantages of the former in some respects; yet private Prayer is necessary for thy *private* Wants, and tends mightily to the keeping up the Zeal, and Warmth of true Devotion; and to the Knowledge of our selves, and the State of our own Souls. If a wise Heathen could say, that he never was less Idle, than when he was out of Business; nor less alone, than when he was in Private; because ^a that when he was in his Retirement, he prepar'd himself for publick Business, by Thinking, and Meditation; and when he was alone, he had the greatest Liberty of discoursing with, and concerning himself, of the State of his own Mind; How much more can a

^a Tully's Offic. p. 281.

Christian say so, who believes one Supreme God, and a Providence, and invisible Powers above him, and can look up to Heaven with Confidence to God, as a Father in Christ; and can lay all his Wants, and his Necessities before him, in assurance of being heard, and relieved by him. O comfortable Retirement! O happy Rest! or may I not rather say, O *blessed Company*, O *busy* and *laborious Rest*! in which the Mind is exercised, whilst the Body is at quiet, and converses with God; places it self as in his Presence, surrounded with his Heavenly Host. For the invisible Powers of the other World, are nearer to us, and more conversant with us than we imagine; and the more intimate Communications of God to his Servants, in Scripture, were whilst they were alone; we seldom reading (as one has well observ'd) that he appear'd by himself, or his Angels, to any of his Prophets or Saints whilst they were in a Throng, but when they were withdrawn to private Oratories, or places of Prayer, by the sides of Rivers, or in private Retirements.

Thus God appear'd to *Jacob*, when he was left alone; for (to proceed to a second Observation) it is plain that it was *God* who appear'd to *Jacob* in a Human Shape; who is thereupon said to be a *Man*, at the 24th Verse, and *God*, at the 28th and 30th Verses. And is also said to be *the Angel*, in *Hosea* Chapter 12. Vers. 4, 5. that is, Christ who
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is God, the Angel of the New Covenant ^a. God therefore, who is every where, but after diverse Ways and Manners, assumed a real Body, and was pleased in Condescension to us, and for our better Instruction, to enter the Lists (if I may so speak) with frail Man. For this was not transacted in Vision only, but was a real and Bodily Conflict (although it be of a Mystical and spiritual Signification) as appears from the shrinking of *Jacob's* Sinew, and his halting upon his Thigh; and his confessing that he had seen God *Face to Face*, and that yet nevertheless his Life was preserved unto him: Which Phrase is not us'd in Scripture concerning Things transacted in Visions and Dreams, and in the Mind and Imagination only.

For our more orderly proceeding, you may observe from the Text these following Particulars.

1. The Wrestling or Conflict of God with Man; whereby the Temptations, Afflictions, and Trials we are to meet with in our Spiritual Warfare, are aptly represented unto us, and withal we are taught, that they are from the Lord. For Satan could not afflict *Job* but by God's Permission; neither is there any Evil (of Punishment) in the City, which he hath not done.

2. We may from hence learn, that we must expect Temptations, as soon as we set

^a *Pocock*, in *Hos.* 642.

about any important Duty. For thus a Man wrestled with *Jacob* as soon as he retired to Meditation and Prayer; and our Saviour was led up into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil, as soon as he was Baptized; to teach us, that as soon as we make Profession of a stricter Course of Life, we must expect to be assaulted by the Tempter.

3. From the sudden Assault, with which *Jacob* was surprized, by a Man laying hold of him unawares, the usual Surprize of Temptations, Afflictions, and of the Evil Day may be signified unto us.

4. From the Time when the Conflict began, *viz.* about Evening, and the Continuance of it, until break of Day; the long Continuance of Temptations and our Christian Combat, during the dark State, and long Night of this World, until Christ shall come in his Kingdom, may be represented unto us; when according to the Allusions to it, or Descriptions of it, given in the Book of *Canticles*, the Apostle *St. Peter*, and other places of Scripture; *the Day shall dawn, and the Day-star shall arise in our Hearts.* This long Night of Affliction, Ignorance and Sin shall pass away; the Day shall break, and the Shadows shall flee away.

And this Observation is not a groundless Fancy, but is founded upon the Spiritual Sense of the History, and Transactions, as well as of the Types of the Old Testament, made
use

use of by our Saviour and the Apostles. According to which allegorical Analogy, Dark-ness and Night signifies great Distress and Afflictions, as appears from *Gen.* 15. 12, 17. where it is said, that an horror of great Dark-ness fell upon *Abraham*, to denote the great Distress of his Posterity. And the twenty Years Servitude of *Jacob* to a harsh Father in Law; the Labour of his Hands, and his many Afflictions and Hardships whilst he was consum'd in the Day by the Drought, and the Frost by Night; and his Sleep departed from him; do signifie the continual Hardships we must undergo in our Pilgrimage through this World; the little Quiet we must expect in it; the Vexations we must meet with, sometimes from within, and sometimes from without; sometimes from Strangers, sometimes from those of our own Household, our own melancholy Thoughts, or unruly Passions, at all Opportunities; from those imperious Task-masters, and harsh Fathers in Law, Satan, Sin, and the Flesh.

Our Life is well resembled to a Conflict or Combat (of which Wrestling was one sort amongst the Ancients) and that in a dark State with invisible Powers, the Instruments of God's Justice; and sometimes with Trials more immediately from God himself, to exercise and approve us; wherein by making use only of such a Measure of Strength

as is proportion'd to the Strength of Grace he affords us, he enables us to bear up against his own Trials, and so to wrestle with God, and overcome him. The Wrestling of *Jacob* consisted (as the Prophet *Hesekiah* explains it, *Hos.* 12. 3, 4, &c.) in violent Endeavours joined with Faith in God's Promises; and with Prayers, strong Cryings and Tears, the Instruments and Weapons of our spiritual Warfare; which we are to make use of during the long Night of this Life, until the breaking of the Day of the other; the Day, which does but dawn in this World, and after a short Time, shall be swallowed up in the perfect Day of Eternity. And, O when will that Day-spring from on high break in with great Power and Efficacy upon our Souls? When, when will that God, who is Love, shed abroad his Love more plentifully upon our Hearts; and when will Christ's Kingdom prevail so powerfully in the World, as that, according to the sacred Oracles of Holy Writ, the Wolf and the Lamb may lye down together, and our Spears may be beat into Pruning-Hooks. When will this long Night of Sin and Ignorance be past; when will the Day break, and the Shadows flee away? But, O thou blessed Lord, if thou tarriest long, we will wait for thee, for the Just must live by his Faith. Until then Christians shall be more or less under the Power of Sin and Satan;
and

and even when we are delivered from his Dominion and Slavery, we shall meet with fresh Trials of our spiritual Strength from God himself, who, if we wrestle lawfully, and strive earnestly, will shew forth his own Strength in our Weakness, he will say unto us, My Grace is sufficient for you; by his own Strength we shall have Power with and against himself; and we shall prevail by his Assistance here, and be rewarded by him to all Eternity hereafter.





SERMON XXII.

The Spiritual Combat.

G E N. XXXII. 24, 25, 26.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the Day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his Thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's Thigh was out of Joint as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the Day breaketh: And he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me.



IN this Passage of Holy Writ, God shews Mankind, by one of the most effectual Ways of Instruction, how they ought to behave themselves under Afflictions and Trials; and withal teaches them, as by a lively Emblem, visible Picture, and sensible Representation, many great and important Truths; that so they might make the greater and the more lasting Impression upon their Minds; whose Knowledge takes its Original from the Senses; and

and who are the most effectually led from sensible Things to Spiritual. Which was one Cause why our Saviour taught mostly by Parables; and why God in Scripture, in Condescension to the Customs of the Eastern Nations, who instructed by Hieroglyphicks, gave *Abraham*, and the holy Patriarchs, sensible Representations of Spiritual Things.

I have already shewn you that this was a real and bodily Conflict, which yet was significative of, and accompanied with a spiritual one; and have remark'd unto you several Things very observable, which I shall but just mention, and then proceed.

1. From the particular Way of Conflict by Wrestling, made choice of by God, we are taught that Trials and Afflictions from God, are to exercise our Graces, and encrease our spiritual Strength: As Wrestling is not a Combat which ends in Death or Wounds; but is a Trial of Skill, and an exercise of Strength. And so doth God *wrestle* with Man, to try his Reins and his Heart; the Strength of his Graces, and the Skill or Christian Prudence of them; the *Firmness* of his *Faith*, the *Force* of his *Zeal*; his Courage, Constancy, and Perseverance. Knowing that Tribulation is a Means sanctified by God himself, to obtain, exercise, and increase Patience; and that Patience worketh Experience; and Experience Hope;

and that such a Hope produces an Assurance of a Reward. Hence the Apostle compares the Christian Life to *Wrestling*; in which Men *strive* for *Mastery*, and tells the *Ephe-sians*, that they must wrestle against Principalities and Powers, and against spiritual Wickednesses in high Places. When the Devil assaults a good Man, he designs and intends indeed his utter Destruction; but God *permits* it to be only a *Wrestling*, a *Trial of Skill*, and an exercise of Graces; which is the true Design of God's Trials, and the *Use* he makes of the Devil's Temptations. When therefore thy Graces are exercised by any Trial for the *Good* of thy Soul, thou may'st be sure that God more *immediately*, as it were, *wrestles* with thee; but when thou art tempted to any *Evil* to thy own hurt or ruin, it is *from the Devil*, or *thy own Lusts*, which God permits out of good Reasons, and makes use of to good Ends.

2. In this Passage it is related that God wrestled with Man, and prevailed not against him; yea, that Man had Power with God, and prevailed with him; insomuch that after a long Strife for Mastery (from Evening to Day-break) *Christ*, the *Lord God of Hosts*, in a human Shape, *importuned him to give over the Combat*, and at last yielded the Victory to him; confessing, *Ver. 28.* that he had *Power with God, and had prevailed.* And *he* (that is, God) *said, Ver. 26. Let me go,*
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for the *Day breaketh*: He represents himself in Condescension to our Capacities, as it were, weary of the Conflict, and desired to be dismissed from so toilsome, and so laborious an Exercise. A strange and most surprizing Passage, that Man should prevail with God; that God should be wearied by him the *Worm Jacob*; and after a Request that an End should be put to the Conflict, should permit himself to be deny'd by Man, until he had bestowed a Blessing upon him. *And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* For the better Understanding of which Passage, you may observe, That God made use of a *less Measure* of Strength in the Body he assumed, than that was with which he strengthened *Jacob*. It was in this Case, to make use of a familiar Example, (and it is too nice a Squeamishness both in Preachers, not to use them, and in Hearers to be offended at them, when they are not too coarse and homely, and beneath the Dignity of sacred Matters) It was in this Case, I say, as when a Father teaching his Child to wrestle, makes use of no more Strength than there is occasion for, to try and exercise the young Beginner; whom he also encourages and emboldens to such Exercises, by permitting him sometimes to get the Mastery over him; and sometimes by exerting a more than ordinary Strength, foils him, and shews him his own Weakness. And thus did God in this Conflict proportion
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the Strength of the Body he took, to the Strength of *Jacob's* Body, and encreased, or lessened it, as he saw fit. For some time it was an equal Combat; once he shewed his Strength, and added a greater Proportion of it than *Jacob's* Body was able to bear, when he touched the Hollow of his Thigh, and put it out of Joint: But at last, when he thought fit to suffer *Jacob* to prevail over him, he withdrew from the Body he assumed, some Degrees of the Power and Strength which proceeded from him; whereupon *Jacob* had *Power over the Man which wrestled with him.*

But although this Conflict was real, and Bodily; yet it was also of a Spiritual Signification; God by all this teaching us, the prevalency of Prayer, and persevering Endeavours; and withal the Sense we ought to have of our own Weakness, in the midst of our greatest Success, and our greatest Strength. The prevalency of Prayer, and persevering Endeavours, is expressed by God's saying unto him, *Let me go*; as if the Prayers carried a *Holy Violence* along with them, and the *Kingdom of Heaven were to be taken by such Force.* God hath annex'd *Success* to *Importunity*, to encourage us to Perseverance, and to excite us to watch in Prayer without fainting and ceasing; and to this end is pleased to represent himself, as not able to execute his Purposes and Judgments, by reason of Man's unwearyed importunities with him. *Let me alone*, says God to *Moses*, *Exod. 32. 18.* that is, impor-

importune me no more, that I may consume them. *Hæc vis Deo grata est.* Such Force is acceptable to God; such Violence will prevail with him; but alas (as the Prophet *Isaiab* complains, *Chap. 64. 7.*) *There is none that calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee;* that is, that useth due fervency and importunity with God: But O do not therefore hide thy Face from us, neither consume us because of our Iniquities. The Sense we ought to have of the Divine Power, and Assistance, and our own Weakness, amidst our greatest Successes, in our Spiritual Warfare, is signified by God's touching the hollow of *Jacob's Thigh*, and by the hollow of his Thigh being out of Joint, when he wrestled with him. Which was done to humble him; to make him sensible of his own Weakness, and of the Power of God; who could with one single touch disable him in the midst of his Conflict; and by withdrawing his Grace from him, could effectually shew him how *impotent* he was of himself, and how utterly unable to make the least resistance in the Day of Tryal. For it was by God's own Strength that he had power with God; he was strengthened by the Blessing of him whom he overcame; and God, who was a *Combatant* with *Jacob*, was also an *Assistant* of him; but to shew him that the Strength he had, was of it self but Weakness, and that nothing can withstand the Divine

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vine Power, when it exerts itself, he touched him with such a *force* as made him sensible of the Power of him he wrestled with; and his Lameness was as the Messenger of Satan to the Apostle *Paul* to buffet him; and as a Thorn in the Flesh, lest he should be exalted above Measure, through the abundance of the Strength which God had given him. So natural is Pride and Self-confidence to Man, that his greatest Successes must be alloy'd with some Losses; and as in the *Roman Triumphs* a Slave accompanied the Conqueror, to put him in Mind that he was but a Man, and of the Condition he himself might have been reduced unto by the Fate of War: So doth God intermix Calamities with extraordinary Successes and Prosperities; lest, as *Hezekiah* (2 *Chron.* 32. 25, 26.) after his prodigious Victory over the *Assyrians*; he *should not humble himself; but his Heart should be lifted up, and he should not render unto the Lord, according to the benefits done unto him.* Thou therefore, O *Worm Jacob* (to bespeak all Christian Combatants, as the Prophet does the faithful *Israelites*, *Isa.* 41. 10, &c) fear not, when thou art assaulted with Trials, and Temptations; for it is God that is with thee, it is he that sustains thee, as well as tries thee, therefore be not dismayed; for his Grace is sufficient for thee; and although thou canst not think to come off without some Losses in thy Spiritual Combat; yet he
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will strengthen thee, he will help thee, he will uphold thee with the Right Hand of his Power ; he will use a less force against thee, than that is with which he enables thee. Only be humble, that God's Strength may appear in thy Weakness ; attribute all the Success thou meetest with to his Strength ; and confess thy self to be the *Worm Jacob*, to be weak and despicable, one whom the Divine Power can easily crush into Nothing ; and who may't be easily trodden under foot by thy Spiritual Enemies, if God do not support thee.

Again, it appears from many Circumstances of the Text, compared with *Hosea* 12. 3, &c. that this was not only an outward Bodily Conflict, but an Inward and Spiritual one. For it is said in *Hosea*, that he wept, and made supplication unto Christ the Lord of Hosts and the Angel of the Covenant, and so had power over him, and prevailed. For he did wrestle not only in Body, but in Spirit too ; and made use of the Spiritual Weapons of Prayer, Tears, Faith, and zealous and vehement Endeavours to overcome in the Trial.

The Trial was this : God had promised that he would prosper him ; that he would make his Seed as the Sand of the Sea ; that he should return unto his Country, and to his Kindred, and that he would deal well with him. All which he firmly believed, notwithstanding his Brother

was

was coming against him with a Band of four hundred Men, which he was no ways able to resist. God, by wrestling with him in a humane Body, tries his Faith, and Strength, and whether he so much believed, and trusted in his Promises, as to encounter a strong Man laying hold of him, and hindring him to pass the River, that he might go on to his own Country; and whether in the Faith of God he would make the same Resistance if occasion required it, against his Brother, who came out to meet him: And withal permitted him to overcome, to give him an Assurance, that he who had overcome God, might not fear the overcoming his Brother. Whereupon the Lord said unto him, at the 28th Verse, Thy Name shall no more be called *Jacob*, but *Israel*; for (as the Word *Israel* signifies) as a Prince hast thou Power with God, and with Men, and hast prevailed; Thou didst prevail over *Esau*, when thou obtainedst the Birth-right and the Blessing from him; thou hast prevailed over thy harsh Father in Law, *Laban*; nay, through God's Strength enabling thee, thou hast prevailed with God: Fear not therefore *Jacob*, who art a *Worm* as to thy *own Strength*, but *Israel*, as thou art *enabled by God*.

Besides Faith, he made use of Prayers, Tears, and ardent Supplications unto God; and joined vehement, zealous, and persevering Endeavours to his Prayers. You see here,

here, my beloved Brethren, as in a sacred Picture, or divine Emblem, (and the most exquisite Fancy and Imagination cannot present you with a better) the Weapons of our Spiritual Warfare; Faith, or a Trust and Reliance, an Assurance or Confidence in God's Promises; earnest and vigorous Prayers joined with strong Cryings and Tears; powerful and persevering Endeavours, resolved to admit of no denial, and to bear up against any Pressures or Troubles. For he gave not up the Combat even when the hollow of his Thigh was out of Joint; and would not let the Man go even when he began to perceive that he was no meer Man that wrestled with him, but Christ, who is God, the Angel of the Covenant, in a humane Shape; who blessed him, and redeemed him from all Evil. O the Love and Wisdom of our good God; to permit us to have a holy Boldness and Confidence with him; to have a filial Access unto him, as unto a Father in Christ; to cleave close unto him by a lively Exercise of Faith, and resolute Affections; to lay hold on him the more earnestly, the more he seem to withdraw himself from us; and to say, I will not let thee go until thou blestest me. By all which God educates his Children in Faith and Perseverance, and in a Boldness of Access to the Throne of Grace in and through Christ; in whom being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God;
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and boldness, and access with Confidence unto him; but this Confidence must be joined with Humility, with a Sense of our own Weakness, the Necessity of God's Assistances; and the many Foils we may expect in our Christian Conflict; because of the Weakness of the Flesh; and our having the Treasure of God's Grace in earthen Vessels; which are made frail, and easie to be broken, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God; then we may wrestle with Trials and Temptations; because he that wrestles with us doth uphold us; the Eternal God is our Refuge, and underneath us are the everlasting Arms. He proportions the Strength of the Trial to the Strength of the Grace he gives us; and suffereth us not to be tempted above what we are able. But then he expects that we should make use of the Strength he gives, that we should be powerful in the Might of our God, and not cowardly give way to a Temptation. *Jacob* is an Emblem of faithful Christians, and we must imitate his Example, if we expect the like Success; neither can we think to have Palms in our Hands in the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, if we do not fight the good fight of Faith, and strive earnestly for Mastery. The Spouse in the *Canticles*, Ch. 3. fought Christ at first by Night, on her Bed, after a lazy, formal, and slothful Manner, and complain'd that she fought him, but found him not. She then
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arose, and went about the City, that is, stirred her self up to a more lively frame of Heart, and made use of more zealous Endeavours than formerly, but still complain'd that she fought him, but found him not. At last she met with some Watchmen, or faithful Ministers, whose Preaching being guided by God, made deep Impressions upon her Soul; and then she in a small time found him whom her Soul loved. It was but a little that I pass'd from him, but I found him whom my Soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my Mother's House, and into the Chamber of her that conceived me. That is, they taught me that I must trust in, and depend upon Christ by a lively Faith, and a holy Love, join'd with Reverence and godly Fear, by zealous Affections, and persevering Endeavours in the Ways of Godliness; by Prayers, Tears, Supplications, and earnest Wrestlings in Spirit; and that then I might be sure to enjoy a more intimate Communion with him; and have a greater Sense of his Love towards me. All which, says she, I found to be true. For I had not pass'd from them for any great Distance, but I found him whom my Soul loveth; that is, I received immediate Satisfaction in the midst of my anxious Thoughts, and God soon turned my enquiring Soul towards him. But, O Lord, we are of our selves frail Men, we can do nothing,

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thing, we are nothing of our selves; and the Light thou affordeſt us ſhineth in a dark Place, in the miſt of our natural Ignorance, and the thick Darkneſs of our wilful Sins and Errors; how therefore ſhall we ſee and find him whom our Soul loveth, except thou enlighten us; except the Day-ſtar from above ſhine upon our Hearts; except the Day-break, and the Shadows of Sin, Ignorance and Errors flee away? Do thou therefore enlighten my own Heart, whom thou haſt ſet as a Watchman to guide and direct this thy People; and, O Thou, who art the God of the Spirits of all Fleſh, give me a wiſe and an underſtanding Heart, that they may not be as Sheep who have no Shepherd; and encline their Hearts, powerfully and effectually encline them, if it be thy bleſſed Will, (for we may Plant and Water in vain except thou givelt the Increate) to hear and obey what thou ſhalt ſpeak by me out of thy Word, and according to thy Will unto them; that we ſo ſeek thee by Faith as to find thee here, and be Eternally happy with thee hereafter.

S E R.



S E R M O N XXIII.

The Principle of Regeneration,

JOHN III. 1, 2, 3.

There was a Man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by Night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no Man can do these Miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him; Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.



HIS Passage of the Gospel is very well worthy your most serious Consideration, as containing great and important Truths, relating to the Spiritual Estate of your Immortal Souls. From the first and second Verses we may observe the Introduction, and Occasion of the Words of our Saviour, to wit, that *Nicodemus* came to Jesus, to converse with him, and to re-

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ceive further Satisfaction concerning him and his Doctrine, being convinced by the Miracles he had done, that he was a Teacher sent by God, in a special and extraordinary manner.

He was a Man, it seems, of great repute, upon which account his Name is recorded ^a, and according to the Usage of the *Jews*, who were wont to transmit to Posterity the Names of worthy and good Persons, and rase out of their Genealogies and Histories, the Names of wicked Persons, as unworthy to be preserv'd in Memory ^b. It is further observ'd, that he was a Man of the Pharisees, that is, one of the strictest Sect amongst the *Jews*, who separated themselves from others in Habit, Manners, and a seeming preciseness in Conversation ^c, and thereby gained a great Reputation amongst the People; who were yet the most averse of all to our Saviour, because he reprov'd and detected their Hypocrisie, and thereby shook that Power and Authority they had undeservedly gained amongst the People ^d.

It is further observable, that he was not only a Pharisee, but a Ruler of the *Jews*, or a Member of the great Council amongst them; who had under the *Romans* the chief Government of their Affairs ^e. Now these

^a *Muscul.* in Loc. p. 49.

^b *Muscul.* Ibid.

^c *Hammond* 239. Clerk in Matth. 3. 7. *Camero*, &c.

^d *Muscul.* in *Joan.* 294.

^e *Muscul.* 49. *Hammond*.

Things are recorded, to shew that our Saviour's Miracles were of so great Efficacy, that many of the Rulers of the People, and the most averse to him by Principles and Interest, could not but believe that He was the Christ. *Joan.* 23. 12, 42, 43.

But yet, notwithstanding this Conviction, we see, that he came to Jesus by Night. He *came* to Jesus, which shews his honest Desire of Learning, and his Inclinations to him; but he came *by Night*; secretly for fear of the *Jews*, lest he should be cast out of the Synagogue, and lose his Place amongst the *Jews*, (*Joan.* 7. 50. 19. 39. 9. 22. 16. 2.) who had agreed that if any Man did confess, that he was Christ, he should be put out of the Synagogue. So great hindrances are Wealth, and worldly Honours, Fear, Shame, and Reproach amongst Men, to a cordial sincere Profession of Truth, especially in Times of Danger, Hazard, and Persecution. How hardly shall they who have Riches, so as to trust in them, enter into the Kingdom of God, saith our Saviour, *Mark* 10. 23, 24. And how can ye believe, which receive Honour one of another, and seek not the Honour that cometh from God only, saith our Saviour again. *John* 5. 44. and Chap. 12. 42, 43. the Reason is given why many of the chief Rulers did not openly profess Christ, whom they secretly believed; That they loved the Praise of Men more than

the Praise of God. Fear of popular Disgrace, and love of popular Applause, a too great adherence to and love of the Things of this World, are the chief Causes that Men do not openly profess what they are inwardly convinced of. For he was convinced that our Saviour was a Teacher come from God, and that from the many Miracles he had done, which were of such an extraordinary Nature ^a, that he, and many more of the *Jews* (as appears from the foregoing Chapter, Ver. 23.) believed that he had his Mission from God, and that he by his Power was present with him; and that consequently his Doctrine was from God, who would never set his Seal of Miracles to confirm a Falsity ^b. *We know*, that is, I, and many of the Pharisees and Rulers are convinced, that thou art a Teacher come from God, and an eminent Teacher and Prophet, sent now by God after an extraordinary manner, to instruct us, after that the Gift of Prophecy hath ceased for near 400 Years; and we conclude that thou art so, because no Man can do those Miracles except God be with him by his Divine Power and Efficacy.

To this Address (attended with much Modesty, and an honest ^c Mind) our Savi-

^a See *Pool's Engl. Synopf.* in Loc.

^b *Pool's Engl. Syn.*

^c *Muscul.* *Pool's Syn.*

our, who knew the Hearts of Men ^a, answers after a wonderful and unexpected Manner: For he doth not upbraid him for the Weakness of his Faith and Love, nor sharply reprehend him (as he might justly have done) for his fear ^b, and for not openly professing, what he was inwardly convinced of; neither doth he tell him who he was, or from whom he had his Commission; or instruct him in any of those Truths, which might seem to have a more immediate Reference to *Nicodemus's* Address unto him: But after a surprizing manner he answer'd, that is, begun his Speech thus ^c, and said unto him: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Our Saviour, who knew the Heart, and always spake with such Wisdom and Authority, as Man never before spake, seems (as may be collected from his Answer unto him) to have observed in him three great Faults, which if not removed, he knew he could not be his Disciple. For (1.) He knew that his Heart was not altogether right towards him, but that although he had many degrees of Uprightness and Honesty, that yet he had many allays of Fear, for he came unto him by Night, which shew'd that he fear'd Men

^a Ἀντιειδὼν non semper Interrogationem supponit, Matth. 11. 25.

^b Muscul. 449, 50. sub fin.

^c Poli Syn. in Matth. 25.

more than God, and the Convictions of his Conscience. (2.) He knew and found him to be very desirous of Knowledge, Learning, and Wisdom; but very backward to the practice of Duty, especially Spiritual ones, and most especially when attended with Danger, and renouncing of the Honours, Applause, and Riches of this World. And that he rested much upon external Performances and Righteousness, and his own Parts, and Learning; but did not so much acknowledge the Necessity of internal Righteousness, Holiness, and of the inward Teachings of God by his Spirit^a. And therefore our Saviour, willing to undeceive him, and to teach him the most necessary Lesson at the first time, without which all the other would avail nothing, tells him, that he must not flatter himself, nor think to be his Disciple at the cheap rate of barely believing that he was the Christ, except he at the same time resolved to be a New Man in his Soul, and inward Dispositions; and that he must undertake his Religion in all the most hazardous Performances of it; and expect that these new Dispositions must be wrought in him by a Power from above, a divine, quickning, and enlivening Influence. This doth our Saviour for our Learning and Instruction teach us, (for, for our Use also were these Things written, upon whom the Ends of the World are come) that

^a *Muscul.* p. 51.

he that would bring Souls to God, must teach them the Necessity of an inward Change, and of the Practice of the most hazardous Duties; and must not so much lay before his Auditory the heinousness of some particular Sins (which yet must not be neglected) as of an un sanctified Heart and Life; which is to strike at the root of Evil, and batter the strong Hold of Satan, which being taken, all the other lesser Fortresses would of themselves yield to Truth. As he, who being asked, why he did not preach against excessive long Hair, and some other modish, sinful Vanities of the Age, he lived in? Answered, that if he could be so happy, as to be the Instrument of working a serious Sense of the Necessity of Conversion in the Hearts of his Auditors, they would of themselves redress those lesser Sins and Vanities.

Verily, verily, &c. Except a Man be born again, &c. This Phrase imports two Things.

1. To be born from above (as it is in the Margin of your Bibles.) And,

2. To be New born, or regenerated; both which Senses may be comprehended in this one Scripture-Truth, that Regeneration consists in a new Birth from a Heavenly Divine Principle: For every good and perfect Gift is from above, saith the Apostle, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, through and by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom
 Gifts

Gifts and Graces are more peculiarly attributed in Scripture.

But if you ask me what this Principle is; I answer, that the Scripture hath only in general told us, that it is *Spirit*, some lively active Principle, distinct from our fleshly and natural Principle, proceeding from God; born or produced by the Spirit of God; (that which is born of the Spirit (of God) is Spirit) by which our Souls are enlightned and quickned with holy Light, holy Life, and holy Love, and the whole Man is renewed by its transforming Influence.

But if you ask again, What does the new Birth from this spiritual Principle consist in? I answer, first in general, in one Word, that it consists in holy Tempers and Dispositions of Mind, bringing forth suitable Fruits and Effects in a holy Life and Conversation, according to God's Will, and to God's Glory, as its chief End. By which the Actions of a renewed Person are chiefly distinguish'd from those of un sanctified and hypocritical Christians, or meer natural Men; who take not God's Will as reveal'd in Scripture, especially in the higher Instances of Self-denying and hazardous Duties, to be their Rule, nor his Glory to be their chief End; but Reputation, Health, Gain, or some lower and meaner Ends. For the Virtues practis'd by an Hypocrite, or by a meer natural Man, by strength of natural Parts and a good Education,

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cation, are not much different, as to the Matter of them; but as to the Manner of them, the Principle from which they proceed, and the End to which they are designed. The natural Man doing some good Actions (as being Temperate, for Example) not in Acknowledgment of, and from a Divine Principle assisting him, and attained by Prayer, in attending upon God's Ordinances, but by bare Reason, Constitution, or Example; and not practising this Virtue, because God commands it, and it is to God's Glory, and the eternal Happiness of his own Soul; but because it is for his Health, or his Reputation.

And the force of the quickning, transforming Influence of the spiritual and divine Principle of the new Birth, appears chiefly in these Things, which when Men have attained to, in some Measure and Degree, they are transformed by the renewing of their Minds.

(1.) When they have attained to a solid clear Understanding of all necessary, practical, and saving Truths; which in general are chiefly those which are plainly revealed in Scripture; and in which the disagreeing several Parties amongst Christians (who have any tolerable right to be called so) do generally agree: And are briefly comprehended in the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and the Doctrine of the Sacraments,

craments, as they are laid down and explained in Catechisms, and other good Books.

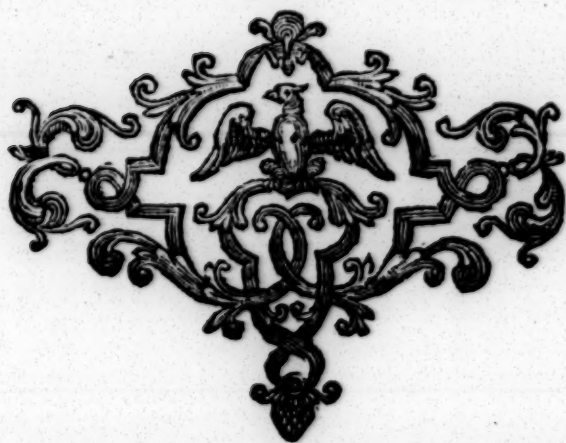
(2.) When this Knowledge so works upon the whole Man, as to have produced a Resignation in his Will to God's Will; a well regulated Desire of, and Love to God, Christ, Heaven, and the heavenly Society of Angels and Saints departed in the Lord; a common universal Love to all Men; and a special Love to the Society of holy Christians upon Earth; a lively, and yet a sober godly Zeal in his Affections, proceeding from Knowledge, and the rational sanctified Desires of his Will: A holy Activity, Readiness, and Christian Courage and Vivacity in all the practical Powers of the Soul, by which our Senses, and sensual Appetites, are made compliant to Reason and Grace, and our Fancy is kept in such due order (by a Care and Watchfulness over our Bodies and Senses) as to be cleansed and purified from filthy and vain Thoughts and Desires, by the Impression of contrary, that is, good, pure, and holy ones.

O thricehappy is the Man, who is arrived to high Degrees and Measures of this sanctifying Grace; for he is born again, and is as a compleat perfect Man in Christ Jesus; and O happy is he who is in the Way to this Perfection, who undergoes the Pangs of this new Birth, the Struggles and Conflicts betwixt the Flesh and the Spirit, and betwixt

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twixt carnal unrenewed Reason and Grace; for he is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven; but if he proceeds in the Power of Faith, Prayer, and Christian Courage and Perseverance, his Light shall at last break forth as the Brightness, and his Righteousness as the Noon-day.

Which may God grant us out of his infinite Mercy, for the sake of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.



SERMON



SERMON XXIV.

The Nature of Regeneration.

St. J O H N III. 3.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.



FROM these Words I intend, God willing, very briefly and plainly to state and describe the Nature of Regeneration, or of that New-Birth which Christianity requires ; and that I shall do,

First, By shewing the Import of this Phrase, *Born again*.

Secondly, By explaining the Thing it self, and briefly shewing the *Nature* of Regeneration.

Except a Man be born, &c. That we may understand the full Import of this Phrase, we are to observe, that Profelytes to the Jewish Religion, that is, those which were converted

verted from Gentilism to the Jewish Law, were gathered under the Wings of the Majesty of God, that is, were initiated into the Jewish Religion by the three Ceremonies of *Circumcision, Baptism, and Sacrifice.*

A Profelyte thus initiated, was taught to renounce his former Kindred and Relations, *Exuere Patriam, Parentes, Liberos vilia habere*, as *Tacitus* expresses it; to leave Brothers and Sisters, Father and Mother, Wife and Children; and as the *Jews* speak, become as an *Infant new born*; get new Kindred and Relations, as if he had entred into the Womb of a second Mother, and been born again.

Now our Saviour intending in his new Oeconomy of the Gospel to reform what was amiss, supply what was wanting, heighten and spiritualize what was servile and carnal under the Dispensation of the Old Testament, adopts this Phrase, as he did the Ceremony of Baptism, into the Language of the Gospel; whereby he signifies, that as those who were made Profelytes under the Law, were to renounce their old Gentile Kindred and Relations, and become new Members of the Jewish Covenant; so whosoever intended to be a Profelyte of the Christian Religion, ought to forsake his old Lusts and Affections, and be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind; he ought to be a *new* Creature; all old Things in him ought to pass away, and all Things become *new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. Having

Having thus briefly shewn the Occasion and Original of the *Phrase*, I come to consider the *Thing* it self, and shall briefly shew the Nature of Regeneration, or our new Birth, in a plain Discussion of these following Particulars.

1. I shall shew *what* it is to be born again.
2. From *whence*, or from what efficient Cause this new Birth proceeds.
3. *When*, or at what Time this Principle of the new Birth enters into our Souls. And this,
4. By shewing what are the *Effects* of this new Birth, and in what order they are produced.
5. By concluding with a Word or two of Use.

And *First*, I shall shew *what* it is to be born again.

Lapsed and corrupt Nature, together with fleshly Lusts, which proceed from an actual Consent to its Suggestions, are in Scripture Stile ordinarily express'd by the Metaphor of *Old Age*; whether because original Concupiscence, the Root and Spring of all Evil, is successively propagated from our first Parent *Adam*, and so in regard of its long continuance in the World, is called *Old*; or whether because it enfeebles Nature, renders it unactive, and sends every Infant into the World as weak and indisposed to good, as that Man is to action who is loaden with all the Imperfections and Infirmities of old Age; whether

ther for these, or other Reasons, our natural and sinful State is called the *Old Man*, it is not much to my Purpose now to determine. But in opposition to this State of corrupt and sinful Nature, the State of Grace is in Scripture called *new*, 2 Cor. 5. 17. and a Christian a *new Man*, Ephes. 2. 15.

Now as in natural Generation there is a corrupt *fleshy Principle* propagated from our Parents; from which the Disorder of our Nature arises, and our Inclinations and Dispositions to Evil proceed; for that which is born of Flesh, is Flesh: So in this second Generation, there is a new *spiritual Principle* infused into our Souls by God, which (if not resisted) creates in us a clean Heart, and renews a right Spirit within us, which actuates and purifies our Thoughts and Desires, and works in us an uniform and constant Habit of Goodness; for that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

From this new Principle, the Man who before was called σαρκικός, *Fleshy*, as being guided wholly by his fleshly Lusts, is now raised into a higher Rank of Beings, and is stiled in Scripture πνευματικός, a *spiritual Man*.

To this new Principle the Christian owes all his Being and Existence, and accounts that Life which he lives in the Flesh, to be *by the Faith of the Son of God*; he lives indeed (as the Apostle speaks, Gal. 2. 20.) but yet not by his *Soul*, the natural Principle of Life, but

by the *Grace of God*, the Spiritual Principle of Conversion; *Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*

Having thus shewn what it is to be *born again*, to be actuated and moved by an inward Principle of New Life, I proceed to the second thing proposed, and shall shew from whence this Principle proceeds, and that is from *above* ~~above~~, for so the Words may be rendred. (*born from above*) it cometh down from the Father of Lights, from whom every good and perfect Gift proceeds, St. *James* 1. 17. Since Christ's Ascension, the Mission of these Gifts and Graces is more peculiarly ascribed to the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who is sent by Christ, from the Father, to guide us into all Truth. So that this inward Principle is nothing else but the Spirit of God, communicating its Gifts and Graces to us, as the Sun doth its Beams of Light; that so by drawing and uniting our Souls to it self, it may sanctify and purge us, and make us fit Temples for it self to dwell in.

But is the Work of Conversion wholly from the Spirit? Are Men to be merely passive in the Work of their Conversion, and are there not *antecedent* Qualifications required on Man's part, as preparatory Conditions to the Work of Conversion?

I had not mention'd these unhappy Controversies, which have so often torn and rent the Church, and have proved as successful Weapons as ever Satan manag'd to the Destruction of
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of Mankind, if I were not absolutely convinced, that (as they are manag'd by some Men) they cancel the Obligations to a Holy Life, strike at the very root of Christianity, and render it utterly impossible, upon those Principles, for any Man to convert an Infidel, reform a Sinner, or give Comfort to a drooping or despairing Conscience.

I shall therefore wave all curious Enquiries, and nice Speculations, and shall deliver what I am perswaded from the Word of God to be the very Truth, so plainly, that I may be understood by the meanest Capacity, provided he afford that Attention, which Things of so great Concern ought to challenge.

And this I shall perform by avoiding *Pelagianism* on the one Hand, and *Stoicism* on the other; neither by depressing the Grace of God, nor divesting Man of his Free Will; but by ascribing all that is good to God, and all which is evil to Man; by asserting (as our Learned and Acute Doctor *Jackson* has very well stated the Controversie) that the Almighty Creator hath a true Freedom in *doing Good*; and *Adam's* Offspring a true Freedom of *doing Evil*.

And I shall make my Way to the Discussion of this necessary Point, by shewing,

1st, What the Unregenerate Man is *able* to do towards his Conversion.

2^{dly}, What he is *not able* to do.

And First, every Unregenerate Man has at first a true Freedom of doing Evil. That is, although (supposing, but not granting) he cannot but do Evil, yet he may chuse whether he will do this or that particular Evil, or to this or that Degree of Sinfulness; Nay, he may chuse, whether he will run into the Excess even of those Sins to which he is enclined by his corrupt Nature, and disposed by his particular Temper and Complexion. *Nemo repente fuit Turpissimus*; No Man ever arrived to the height of Wickedness on a sudden; he must first offer Violence even to his corrupt Nature, and take great Pains to conquer his inbred Modesty. A Perfection in Sinning is a Work of Time and Industry, and is not arrived unto, until a Man has stifled the prejudices of Education, done violence to his Conscience, and renounced the Principles of common Reason and Honesty.

Good God, what Pains do some Men take to make themselves eternally Miserable! what Force and Violence do they use, to draw upon themselves a *Necessity* of Sinning, and forfeit even the *freedom* which they have to do Evil? For we will suppose the hardest Case imaginable, some Wretch so wilfully wicked that he greedily seeks all Opportunities of sinning, one who calls Evil Good, and Good Evil; who draws on Sin, as it were with Cords of Vanity, and Iniquity as it were with a Cart-rope; one who has drawn a *Necessity* up-

upon himself of Sinning; what course shall such a Man take to rescue himself out of so deplorable a Condition? I answer, the Case of such a Man is indeed dangerous, but not altogether desperate. For there is no Man so dead in Trespasses, but that he has some Degrees of Life, some Degrees of Freedom left.

For this Man, thus sold under Sin, and so much a Slave to Sin, has still the natural Birth-right of all rational Creatures; a Freedom of reflecting upon his own Actions. This Freedom a Man can never forfeit, no more than he can his Rationality. And although he cannot but yield to the least Assault of an actual Temptation, yet every Sinner has his lucid Intervals, when the Heat of a Passion, and the Violence of a Temptation are abated; when his Thoughts are cool, and his Passions calm, he can (if he will) exert his natural Freedom, he can reflect upon his former evil Ways, and set his Thoughts in Order before him: Upon a due and sincere Reflection, his Conscience will aggravate his Sins, and load him with the burden of his Iniquity; the Weight of which will naturally drive him to seek ease and relief; And where is that to be found, but at the Hands of a loving and gracious God, who hath solemnly declar'd himself to be a God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin; who hath sworn in his Holiness, that he hath no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked.

And cannot the most notorious Sinner seek relief if he will; cannot he come to Church; cannot he read or hear the Scriptures; cannot he apply himself to a Spiritual Physician for Instruction and Advice; nay, cannot he pray, if he will? St. *Peter* advis'd *Simon Magus* to *Pray*, even when he was in the Gall of Bitterness and *Bond* of Iniquity, which he would never have done, except it had been in his power to perform it in some Measure. We are not to be meerly passive in the Preparative Works to our Conversion; we are not to lie still, and to expect the Motion of some other Agent; we are not to expect a Voice from Heaven, or one to rise from the Dead to convert us; No, we are to be up and to be doing; we are to abstain from outward Acts of Sin; we are to pray fervently and constantly for God's Assistance; we are to hear and read the Scriptures; we are industriously to follow the Methods of God's Grace, and not to misuse our Free Will to Sin. For the Case seems plainly to stand thus:

1. Every Man has a *Freedom* to do *Evil*; that is, no Man is necessitated to do Evil, but has a Power, by abstaining from wilful Provocations, or at least the Excess and Degrees of some Sins, to render himself more incapable of God's pardoning Mercy, and sanctifying Grace, than he is by Nature; For whosoever asserts the contrary, must, in despite of Distinctions and Evasions, either make God
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the Author of Sin, which is Blaspheming; or reconcile Free-Will and Necessity (as some have tried to do, and I envy them not their Pains) that is, two Members of a Contradiction, Light and Darknefs; for he must prove the same Thing both to be, and not to be; that is, that we have Free Will to Sin, and yet are necessitated.

2. Every Man has a Power to *reflect* upon his own Thoughts and Actions; this is obvious to all Men, and is taught by common Experience.

3. God has given to all Men who are under the Gospel, his *Common Grace*, by which they are prevented from misusing the Free-Will they have to do Evil, and are enabled duly to reflect upon their own Thoughts and Actions, and use those common means of Salvation (as hearing the Scripture, Reading, Praying, and the like) which are tendred to all Men that are under the Gospel. This is obvious from Experience; for the most wicked Men have sometimes felt *restraints* upon their Consciences; from the Confession of all Protestants (even those which are call'd *Arminians*) who assert, that all good Actions proceed from the Grace of God; and from Scripture, which calls all Men to Repentance, commands all Men to work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling, and that for this very Reason, because it is God which worketh in us to will and to do; which Ex-

hortations would be vain, and delusory, and not suitable to the Love of God towards his Creatures, if he had not given Man a Power to do that which he commands.

But I shall say no more to this Head, and indeed had not said so much, as not thinking Controversies proper for a Pulpit, if I were not convinced, that this one Opinion makes Men grow unconcern'd in their spiritual Duties, nay, sometimes desperate.

Man is not properly active in the Act of his Conversion, it is God only which infuses his Regenerating Grace into our Souls, and Man is only a Passive Subject, capable of such a Reception; that is, God gives his Regenerating Grace to a Sinner, so humbled and qualified by his common Grace as we have already describ'd.

But I proceed to the *third* Thing proposed, *When* this new Principle of Regenerating Grace is infused into our Souls by God.

For the plain Discussion of which Point we are to observe, that a Man may be said to be Regenerated two Ways: First, by *Profession*; Secondly, by *Practice*.

And first by Profession; so every Man is Converted or Regenerated when he is *Baptized*, when he consecrates himself to God, and professes to take upon him the Performance of the Baptismal Vow. Hence Baptism is call'd the *Laver of Regeneration*, and those

those which are Baptized into Christ, are said to be dead to Sin; yea, to be buried with Christ in Baptism, *Rom. 6. 2, 4.* And we are said to be *born of Water and the Spirit*, in the 5th Verse of this Chapter; which is generally understood of Baptism, by the Fathers. And there is scarcely any Article of Religion, which has a more general Suffrage from Antiquity, than the Regenerating Efficacy of the Sacrament of Baptism. In Baptism then the Seeds of converting Grace are implanted in our Hearts, which grow up with our Souls, and increase and multiply with the Use of our Reason; so that when a Man arrives to riper Years, if by actual Sins he do not grieve this Holy Spirit, it springs up into all Holy Graces, and produces Habits of Faith and Obedience; and then a Man may be said to be converted, to have crucified the Flesh, the Lusts, and Affections thereof, not only by Profession and Resolution as in Baptism, but by *Practice* also, when he goes on in the State of Repentance, in a constant uniform Habit of Faith and Obedience. For Regeneration is not one transient Act, but the constant Business of a Man's whole Life. As often as we conquer any Lust, subdue any Sin, so often doth God work in us, by his Regenerating Grace. And altho' the Time of its Entrance be ordinarily as unperceivable and unaccountable as the manner of its Operations; yet being sensible and discernible
by

by its Effects, we may reckon these three sensible Times when this new Principle enters: For although it bloweth where it listeth, and we cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth, yet we may hear the Sound thereof, that is, perceive it in its Effects.

Now this new Principle enters into our Souls (as Doctor *Hammond* in one of his popular Sermons has describ'd it very plainly, but very significantly) First, As a Harbinger. Secondly, As a private Guest. Thirdly, As a constant Inhabitant.

And first as a *Harbinger*: It enters as St. *John* Baptist did into the World, to prepare the Ways of the Lord, and to make his Paths streight; and thus the Spirit enters by Way of Preparation, at every awak'ning Sermon; every Reflection upon Judgments and Calamities, which befall us or our Family; every amazing and terrifying Thought; every check and remorse of Conscience, every good Wish, every passionate Sigh, and affectionate Groan; every faint striving against Sin, is a good, although very imperfect *Preparative* to the Grace of Regeneration. Briefly, it enters by Way of Preparation in every outward Restraint, by which God keeps us from Sinning, and every faint Step, and imperfect Endeavour towards Amendment.

And O that Men would not despise these gentle Calls, and soft Voice of the Spirit! that they would not quench this smoking Flax, and not break this bruised Reed!

But,

But, Secondly, It enters as a private *secret Guest*. When the Spirit comes to dwell and make its abode with us, but does not sensibly shew it self, by its Graces and Effects; when the good Seed is sown in our Hearts, but does not yet bring forth Fruit. And thus the Spirit enters at Baptism, when the Spirit of God attending the visible Sign, is implanted in our Hearts.

And, Thirdly, It enters upon some sudden Emergencies and Occasions, as the Advice of a faithful Friend, the Reading some good Book; some grievous Sicknefs or lingring Disease: And thus even some Heathens have been workt upon to reflect upon their former Lives, and acknowledge a God and Providence. And *Pliny* the Younger, being come from a sick Friend, gives us this excellent Advice, [*Ut tales esse sani perseveremus, quales nos futuros profitemur infirmi;*] That we would continue such Men after we are recover'd, as we promised we would be when we were Sick. But, most especially, the Spirit attends the Word read or preached. Thus *St. Austin* dates his Conversion from a casual Reflecting upon those Words of the Apostle, *Rom. 13. 13, 14.* *Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envyng: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts*

Lusts thereof. And this Entrance of the Spirit hath been so discernible, that many Men have been able to tell the very Time of their Conversion. But because Men's Hearts are deceitful, and may take that for the Spirit which is not really so, the most discernible Entrance of the Spirit is my last Particular, when it comes to be an *open, constant Inhabitant*; when it shews it self by its *Effects*; when it helps, improves, and perfects our Faith; when the Seed sown shoots forth into good Actions; when Men see our good Works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. For let Men bestow their Signs and Tokens of Conversion as they please, unless a Man will distract his Conscience with endless Troubles and Disquiet, there is no surer Sign of having the Spirit, than bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit; or of true Conversion, than a settled Habit of *universal Obedience*, enliven'd by an *active Faith*. Which brings me to the Fourth; What are the *Effects* of the Spirit, and in what order they are produced.

Now the Fruits of the Spirit are Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance; in a Word, an *active Faith* and *uniform Obedience*. But these Effects are not wrought in the Soul at once, and on a sudden. It is not our spiritual Warfare, as in a pitcht Battel, wherein one Blow determines the Fortune of the Day; but as in a close Siege, wherein

we are to advance by Steps and Degrees, and have much Ground to gain upon our Enemies. And the *first* Work of the Spirit is, to mortify the Deeds of the Flesh, (now the Deeds of the Flesh are manifest, Adultery, Fornication, and such like) and this it does by withdrawing and expelling those Superfluities of naughtiness which fed and pamper'd it; by giving us Opportunities and Occasions to reflect upon our selves, and consider the State of our own Consciences; by discovering to us the Advantages which Satan takes against us; where the strength of Sin lies, and where our own Weakness; by laying some bodily Affliction upon us, which shall create in us Hatred to our Sins, and render sensual Pleasures uneasie to us. And then by stirring us up to use all those Methods of conquering our Lusts, which may be learnt from Scripture, Experience, or the Advice of a Spiritual Guide.

Our Souls thus disburthen'd in part from the Weight of the Flesh, begin to act more freely and vigorously, and to gain some Ground upon our Affection, in which these fleshly Lusts are seated; and proceed at last to the Accomplishment of our Conversion, which consists in the purifying of our Thoughts and Desires; in weaning our natural Affections from fleshly Lusts, and fixing them upon their proper Object, God and Goodness. For this Cure is wrought not by extinguishing our Affections, (for that is impossible) but by di-

diverting the Current of our Desires from Fleshly Objects to Spiritual. What is Covetousness, but an inordinate Desire of Riches? Now the Spirit mortifies that Affection, by turning the Stream of its Desires from one Object to another, from Temporal Riches to Eternal, from Earthly Treasures to Treasures laid up in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and steal.

What is Ambition, but an excessive desire of Honour? And what greater Honour can there be, than to be accounted the Sons of God, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven? Now the Spirit of Conversion prompts us to the desire of this true real Honour, to the Ambition of being like unto God, and the partaking of that Glory which he hath laid up for all those who truly love him, and keep his Commandments.

What is Rioting and Drunkenness, but an inordinate excessive desire of Mirth, whereby Men seek to raise their drooping Spirits, and divert Melancholy, the most hurtful and most unnatural Disease of the Soul? But alas, such Diversions, although they may sometimes please the sensual Part, yet they always leave a Sting of Remorse in the Conscience: Now the Spirit affords us a more noble Object for our Mirth, *Ephes. 8. 18. Be not drunk with Wine, wherein is excess,* by which we are prompted to all inordinate Lusts, the Consequences
of

of that Sin; *but be ye filled with the Spirit*, speaking to your selves in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, singing and making Melody in your Hearts to the Lord. The Spirit affords us a proper Subject to excite our Joy, and entertain our Affections; the Glorious Nature and Attributes of an Almighty and All-wise God; the Eternal Hallelujahs of the Blessed Spirits, and all those Rivers of Joy which flow at God's Right Hand for evermore. These are the suitable Entertainments of a Christian's Joy, the proper Objects of Spiritual Mirth. These fill the Soul, and are commensurate to its Desires, entertain, nay swallow up all its Faculties; for what can bound the Desires of the Soul, but an infinite, immense Object, by which it is not so much filled, as swallowed up, even as Rivers are by the Ocean?

To conclude this Point, and briefly to sum up what has been said.

A Sinner is first stirred up by the special Providence, or common Grace of God, either at the hearing some Sermon, or reading the Scriptures, by sharp Sicknefs, and a lingring Disease, or some sudden and casual Occurrence, to reflect upon his former evil Ways, to consider his past Life, and weigh his Actions in the Balance of the Sanctuary.

If the Sinner thus awakened humbly applies himself to the Methods of God's Grace, and does not, by a Mis-use of his free-will to
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finning, quench these Sparks, and stifle these first Motions of the Spirit; but with an humble Soul resign himself up to the holy pleasure of God; and by Prayer and diligent Endeavours attends and seconds the Motions of the Spirit, God will give him a Heart fitted and prepared for the good Seed of his Regenerating Grace. And this not for any Merit of his good Works, which wholly proceed from God, but for his Truth, his Promise, and his Mercy's sake.

Into a Heart thus rightly prepared, God infuses his Regenerating Grace, the Divine Principle of our New Birth: In the production of this new Principle, Man is wholly passive, the Creation of a new Heart being the Work of an Almighty Power, to which Man can no more contribute, than he could to his own Creation, but by being willingly Passive, or a Subject not rendered incapable by his own Free-will, and fitted and prepared by the Grace of God.

This new Principle thus infus'd first mortifies our fleshly Lusts, by weakning and deadning our Carnal Desires, by freeing our Souls from the weight of Flesh, and rendering them more lively and active; The Soul strengthned by the Spirit proceeds by the Assistance, and under the Conduct of God's Grace, to the purifying of the Fountain of our Desires, the Heart, by diverting from fleshly Things to Spiritual, and setting
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our Affections upon the proper Object of our Desires, God and Goodness; then is our Conversion accomplish'd, when our Affections are won to the Service of God; when we are renew'd in the Spirit of our Minds, and put on the New Man, which after God is created in Righteousness; Then we shall have Thirstings and Breathings after Eternal Happiness, and our Souls will pant after the Living God. All our Lusts and Affections, which before were the Instruments of Sin, and Servants of the Flesh, will be redeem'd from the bondage of Satan, and we shall enjoy the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God. And our Affections will be set upon God and Goodness, and our Thoughts and Desires will be purely Spiritual; Then our Love of Heaven and Heavenly Things will excite our Delight, and our Delight our Hope, and our Hope will be swallow'd up in the Fruition of them by Faith here, and in our actual Possession of them in Glory hereafter.

Let us all then reflect upon the State of our own Souls, and seriously consider, from what Principle our Actions proceed, whether our coming to Church be not out of Formality, and because it is the Custom of the Place wherein we live; whether we pray that we might only be seen of Men, and our giving of Alms be not to blow a Trumpet to our Praise. Whether we be of this Religion only

because we were bred in it, and it is the Religion of our Country; whether we abstain from Evil meerly for fear of the Laws, our own Reputation, or some other secular Concern and Advantage.

Whosoever abstains from Sin meerly upon those Considerations, is a painted Sepulchre, a counterfeit Christian, and a formal Hypocrite; whosoever intends to see God must be *pure in Heart*, his Soul must not be defiled with any mixtures of Carnality, or Principles of Selfishness and Hypocrisy; all his Thoughts and Desires must be pure (the infallible Sign of Purity of Heart) must tend to God's Glory, and be fixt upon him and Holiness, as their proper Object.

Secondly, Let us have a Care how we resist God's Spirit; Let us attend to, and diligently mark all its Motions; let us cherish each spark of this Celestial Fire, attend to every soft and still Voice of the Spirit: For if we do not, he will speak to us in Thunder; He will either awaken us by the Sting of our Consciences, and rouse us with Judgments, and his chastizing Rod; or he will let us make our selves insensible, and harden our obdurate Hearts.

Let us not then by frequent sinning wound our Consciences, and grieve the Holy Spirit; let us have a Care, lest we stifle our New Birth in its Conception, or lest by our wilful resisting, the Pangs and Throws of the Spirit should

should not have Strength enough to bring it forth.

But I would not have any sincere Penitents, who have been Baptiz'd and wash'd in that Laver of Regeneration, be troubled and disconsolate, much less desperate, because they do not find in themselves that Vigour of Graces, that plentiful Effusion of the Spirit upon their Souls, as they were wont to do, or as they see in other more active and more healthy Christians. For perhaps God withdraws his Graces for some time, to try our Patience, Humility, and Self-resignation. For these, or for other Reasons, God may withhold the more plentiful Effusion of his Spirit. But let such poor disconsolate Souls be assur'd, that if they do their Duty, God will certainly assist them; and if they do not by murmuring and desponding grieve his Spirit, he will certainly (and I dare promise that he will) in his good time give them more and more Comfort, more Zeal in their Devotion, serene and quiet Thoughts, and all the Effects of Joy in the Holy Ghost.

But let us all endeavour to serve God so acceptably in Reverence, and Godly Fear, that being made Partakers of the Gifts and Graces of his Spirit here, we may enjoy the Fruits and Effects of them in Happiness hereafter; which God grant us, for the Merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ.



SERMON XXV.

What it is to be born of Water and Spirit.

JOHN III. 4, 5.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a Man be born when he is Old, can he enter the second time into his Mother's Womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

 Have already observ'd from these Words, and the Verses preceeding, many weighty and important Matters: Which the more I consider, the more am I induced to proceed in endeavouring to unfold them unto you; and in beseeching Almighty God, that he would write them upon all our Hearts, and give us an experimental Knowledge of the great Doctrines and Truths contain'd in them.

The Occasion of the Words was this: *Nicodemus*, a Member of the Jewish Sanhedrim,
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or great Council amongst the *Jews*, being convinced by the Power and Efficacy of the Miracles of our Saviour, that he was a Teacher come from God; that he was at length (after the Gift of Prophecy in a Publick Succession had ceased for near 400 Years) sent, by the one true God, to direct his People in the Way to the Kingdom of Heaven; applies himself to him, to be more fully instructed in the Doctrines he had publickly taught, especially concerning that Kingdom, which the *Jews* then upon just Grounds generally expected; the Scepter being departed from *Judah*; the Prophetical times for the coming of the Messias being, according to all Accounts, well-nigh, or totally expir'd.

Our Saviour, who knew his Heart, does not give a direct Answer to the Application he made unto him: But knowing that he was fearful of Confessing him to be the Christ before Men, lest he should be cast out of the Synagogue, which his coming to him by Night sufficiently testified; and that he was desirous of Knowledge indeed, but not of practising Self-denial, and hazardous Duties; and that he rested much upon external Righteousness, Knowledge, and Learning; but did not so much acknowledge the Necessity of *Internal* Holiness, and the inward Teachings of God by his Spirit; plainly tells him, lest he should flatter himself with false Hopes, that he could not be a Member of his Kingdom,

except he became a new Man ; were born again, and that *from above*, or from Heaven. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Verily, Verily, or, *Amen, Amen*, is a Phrase used in Affirmations, and Asseverations of Truth, and is repeated, or redoubled, to shew the weight, or importance of what is affirmed: As if he had said, attentively and diligently mark, and observe what I say, for it is a Truth of the greatest Moment ; if thou hast Ears to hear, that is, Ears capable of receiving it, open them, and entertain it with thy whole Man, with all the Powers and Faculties of thy Soul, for it will and can satisfy them ; it is a Truth pregnant with Spiritual Sense, and I am the Truth who am about to speak it ; Except a Man be born again, and that from above, or by a Heavenly Divine Principle, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

Nicodemus being unacquainted with Doctrines of inward and spiritual Purity, understood our Saviour's Words in a gross and carnal manner ; and asked him, how it was possible that one, when he was grown a Man, and was of full Years, as he was, should be born again ; How can these Things be ? Can a Man enter the second time into his Mother's Womb, and be born ? Is it possible that a Thing so contrary to common sense and reason

son should ever come to pass? This is a hard Saying, who can bear it?

From this Question we may observe,

(1.) That Men, who busy themselves about useles obscure Matters, and subtle but frivolous Controversies, which tend not to Practice, and Holy Life, or any useful Knowledge (as the Pharisees then did, and many of the Doctors of the Schools before the Reformation) are usually very ignorant in Matters of a Spiritual Nature, in what belongs to the Worship of God, Faith, and Salvation, true Piety, and the inward renewal of the Mind; as not being used to raise their Souls to God, contemplate and meditate upon Spiritual and Heavenly Things; but are busied about vain Janglings, low, earthly, and contemptible Matters ^a.

(2.) That it is a very pernicious Error to be ignorant of the natural Blindness of our Understandings, and the Corruption of our Hearts, and of the great Necessity there is of Divine Revelation, and Spiritual Assistances from God, to instruct, enlighten, and sanctify us. For if he had been sensible of these Things, he would rather have said, Lord, I confess, and with Grief acknowledge, that I have need of Spiritual Light, and Instructions from Thee, who art a Teacher come from God; and that all the Faculties

^a Calvin in Loc.

of our Souls have so much Corruption in them, and have contracted such a Mixture of Defilements, that they have need of being purified and cleansed by God.

After some such manner would he have expressed himself, and not have advanced his Reason above Divine Revelation, and account that impossible, which a Teacher, whom he acknowledged to have come from God, had plainly told him; because he could not comprehend the Manner of it. But our Passions, Corruptions, Vices, and Carnal Thoughts and Imaginations, trouble and defile the Soul, as Mud cast into a clear Fountain of Water; so that she cannot clearly see Divine Truth flowing into it from God's Spirit, which would otherwise be a Well of pure living Water, springing up into Everlasting Life^a.

But (3.) although we are not to reject what we cannot fully comprehend, when it plainly appears to be of Divine Authority and Revelation; yet a modest, candid, and ingenious Search, is not to be blamed; and often meets with a proportionable Satisfaction, as a Reward from God. For it is one Thing to question Divine Truths, with a Spirit of Pride, Contempt, and Derision; and to reject what I am satisfied is revealed by God, because I cannot comprehend the Mode and Manner of it, which is a Sign of much Infi-

^a *Musc. 52.*

delity and Ignorance of our selves, and the Shallowness of our Capacities: And it is quite another thing to be so struck with Admiration at the Wonderfulness of a Matter, as to say with *Abraham* and *Sarah*, *Shall of a surety a Child be born to us, who are so Old?* or with the Blessed Virgin to the Angel, *How shall this be?* Or even with *Nicodemus* in my Text, to say, out of an honest Simplicity, and ignorance of the true meaning of the Words which were spoken; *How can a Man be born when he is Old?* For this last Question proceeding from such a Temper, received a gracious, and a plainer Answer from our Saviour, who was wont to deal otherwise with Men of captious, proud, and perverse Spirits; and who asked Questions only to entangle him in his Talk.

For we read in the next Verse, that Jesus answer'd him after a more plain and explicit manner to the Question proposed: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.*

From which Words observe these Things:

(1.) That our Saviour introduces what he would say, by those earnest Words of Affirmation and Asseveration which he was wont to use upon extraordinary Occasions, with some sort of more than ordinary Zeal and Concern for their Souls; *Verily, verily, I say unto thee:* Attend to what I say, for it is an

an infallible, a necessary, and an important Truth, proceeding from him who is Truth it self; a Truth worthy your Consideration, and to be heartily believed, and embraced by you.

(2.) By *Water* is sometimes meant in Scripture the *Baptismal Water*, by which the inward Washing and Cleansing of the Soul is signified and represented, and *Sacramentally* transacted, sealed, and celebrated; and those who are Baptized, are placed in a State of Regeneration, or under the Means of it. For it is a Truth agreeable to God's Word, that except a Man be born of Baptismal Water, he cannot ordinarily enter into the Kingdom of God: *Ordinarily*, I say, excepting extraordinary Cases; when there is no contempt, and wilful neglect of that Sacramental Washing. As Circumcision under the *Jewish* Covenant, the Want of which was threatned with Death (*Gen. 17. 14.*) was yet dispensed within the Wilderness, when they were in the Way; because they were uncertain of their Stay in any Place, *Josh. 5. 5, 7* ^a.

But (3.) by *Water* is chiefly meant in Scripture, and in this place, that without which Baptismal Water availeth nothing unto Salvation; even those *sanctifying Graces* of God, by which, as by *Water*, we are *washed*, purged, and cleansed from our Sins ^b. *Isa. 44. 3.*

^a *Poli Engl. Syn.*

^b *Grot. in Loc.*

Ezech. 36. 25, 27. John 4. 10. 7. 38, 39^a. by Virtue of Christ's Blood, which is a Fountain open for Sin, and for Uncleanness. According to his Mercy he saved us, *by the Washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*, (saith the Apostle, *Tit. 3. 5.*) by delivering us from a sinful State, and cleansing us from the filth of Sin, of which Baptism is a Sign and Seal.

But (4.) our Saviour tells us, that we must be born *of the Spirit* as well as of Water; by which, as it is distinguish'd from Water, is precisely meant the *renewing Graces* of the Spirit, by which we *live* to Righteousness, as by the other Graces, signified by Water, we *died* to Sin, when we were purged and cleansed from it.

And by the Spirit, is meant a Divine Principle in the Soul, working new Tempers and Dispositions of Mind in it, manifesting themselves by the Effects and Fruits in a holy Life and Conversation; which Principle usually enters at first as a *Harbinger*, by way of Preparation; then as a *Guest*, by short visits of Divine Love; and lastly, as a constant *Inhabitant*, working an uniform Obedience, and leaving in some a well-grounded Hope of God's Favour, in others great Comfort, Satisfaction, and Assurance, and in some few of Christ's chiefest Servants, Sons, and Friends, (as he is pleased to call them) extraordinary

^a *Clerk in ista Loca.*

Degrees of Joy and Delight; after no mean Afflictions, spiritual Troubles, Wrestlings, and Contests betwixt the Flesh and the Spirit. For God's Gifts and saving Graces are of different Degrees, and consequently leave different Degrees of Comfort and spiritual Strength in the Soul.

I shall, God willing, take all Occasions to discourse of these weighty Matters, which are indeed almost the one thing necessary; and by frequent inculcating of them, endeavour to fix them upon my own and your Minds; that being deeply rooted, they may bring forth fruit unto Holiness, and in the End everlasting Life.

And be not disgusted by frequent Repetitions of the same general Heads; for it is a Sign (if they are weighty Matters) that the Preacher speaks them not rashly, and that they are not light Things, that he values not; but that he thinks them necessary, and that he had long consider'd and digested them. But having spoken so lately concerning the Nature of this spiritual Principle, and because there will be Opportunity to discourse of it again upon the following Verses of this Chapter, I shall at this time insist no further on it; but shall end with just mentioning some brief Instructions how we may attain this heavenly Principle.

And (1.) be sure to live an innocent and unblameable Life, as to thy outward Conversation

fation and thy Dealings amongst Men, most especially avoiding Dishonesty in the one, and Intemperance in the other; because *Dishonesty* is a Sin against natural Light and Conscience, and the fundamental Principle of all Morality and Civil Society: Do as thou would'st be done by. And *Intemperance* more immediately defiles the Soul, and clouds the Understanding with fumes of Sensuality; and a too full Body oppresses and weighs down the Mind, whilst it endeavours to raise and lift up it self to God. Be very *Charitable*, nay, bountiful in Alms-Deeds, especially when any more than ordinary Opportunity offers it self, as it doth at this time from the great Losses of many poor Sufferers by Fire, who, I hope, will meet with a proportionable Share of your Liberality; whereby you will shew, by the best outward Evidence of good Works, the inward regeneration and renewal of your Minds; outward Actions flowing from an inward Principle of God's Spirit, predominant in your Hearts.

(2.) Be sure to examine thy self diligently and strictly, according to God's Commandments, as they are laid down in the *Whole Duty of Man*, and other good Books out of Scripture. And whilst thou art in this Exercise, thou wilt find that thy Conscience will upbraid thee, as to the Commission of some Sins, and the Omission of some Duties: Be sure to amend with all speed
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and diligence, what thou thus findest amiss in thy self: And then at the next Examination, thou wilt perceive more and more Faults; which if thou procedest to amend, as the strictness of thy Examination encreases, and thy carefulness in Amendment; so will thy spiritual Understanding of thy Defects, and thy spiritual Strength to amend them encrease too.

(3.) Be constant and fervent in Prayer, and take Notice of the returns of spiritual Grace which God makes to thy Prayers; and be heartily thankful for them. And to thy Prayers join Alms-deeds, according to thy Ability, constant Temperance, and frequent Fasting or Abstinence, according to the Strength of thy Mind, and the other Opportunities in thy Body; but howsoever, be always sure to be strictly Sober and Temperate; for a constant Temperance is much better than Fasting only at some solemn Times, and by starts and fits, and then freely indulging thy self all the Week or Year after.

(Lastly,) Resign thy self patiently into the Hands of God in Well-doing: And be sure through the whole Course of thy Religious Exercises, and of this spiritual Life of Godliness and Holiness, have Faith in God through Christ; rest and depend upon him for Grace and Strength, and commit thy Ways unto him in a profound Humility, not only towards God, but towards thy Neighbour. For to be born again, is to become a Child
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in Meekness, as well as Innocence, and other Graces, which our Saviour signified by setting a Child amongst his Disciples when they strove for Superiority; and which the Psalmist elegantly expresses, when he says, that he had no proud or high Thoughts, but kept his Soul low, *as a Child, yea even as a weaned Child.* And here, in consequence to Mens natural Tempers, and the false Opinions and Customs of the World, will arise a difficult, a long, and a doubtful Contest betwixt the Flesh and the Spirit; the former often being too strong for the latter, more or less, according to a Man's Constitution, and his Education; which generally favours the Flesh, and the corrupt Part in Man; and trains the Youth up in false Notions of Honour, Selfishness, and Pride. Yea, the natural Corruption we bring with us into the World, turns the Scales on this Side; and it is no easie thing to bend our Inclinations to the other; which fear of Disgrace, and being contemn'd in the World, much encreases and augments. Here then is the difficult Task, to have a mean Opinion of our selves; and patiently to bear the mean Opinion which others have of us; to be a Child again, innocent, meek, and low in our own Eyes.

A hard Saying, Flesh will say, and even our natural Reason, whilst Unregenerate; but if we cannot enter into the Kingdom
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of Heaven without it, it must be patiently heard, and patiently obey'd. Begin therefore, and go on in the Power of Faith and of Prayer; and if thou hast frequent Failings in the Conquest of this beloved Sin, which is so natural to all, and so powerful in many Constitutions; yet do not give way, much less despair; but be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might, and he will at last give thee thy desir'd Success, Grace and Peace here, and Eternal Happiness hereafter.





SERMON XXVI.

Of being in Christ.

2 COR. V. 17.

Therefore if any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.



THE Apostle in the former Verses (*vers. 13, &c.*) tells the *Corinthians*, that the Glory of God, and their Good, was the Design of all his Words and Actions towards them; and that he was constrain'd to it, by the most Powerful of all Motives, the Love of Christ; who died that Men should live unto him, and not unto themselves; nor to one another only upon external Accounts, or natural, and worldly Considerations and Advantages, but upon Spiritual: Christ himself after his Ascension, being no longer to be known, honour'd, and apply'd unto by Christians, but after a Spiritual Manner; and as he is risen again to a new Life, and a glorify'd State in Heaven. And therefore, says the Apostle, seeing that Christ now liveth not *after the*
Y *Flesh,*

Flesh, that is, in that moral State and Condition, in which we convers'd with him upon Earth ; but liveth unto God (*Rom. 6. 4.-- 14.*) *after the Power of an endless Life*, (*Hebr. 7. 16.*) Not only we who are his Apostles, and Ministers ; but all who are so *in Christ*, as to be true Christians, are by Virtue of that Union new Creatures, they partake of Christ's new Life, live with him by Grace here, and shall be glorified with him hereafter.

We have in these Words these *two* Things observable.

1. The *Union* of Christians with Christ---
Therefore, if any Man be in Christ.

2. The *Result* and Effect of this Union---
He is a new Creature.

I. To be *in Christ*, is an Expression chiefly taken from the Members being in, or united to the Body, particularly to the Head, the Chief and commanding Part of it: And from the Branches, being in, or united to the Body of the Tree. From whence Christ is said to be the *Head* of the Church in Scripture, and to be the true *Vine*, and Christians to be the Branches.

And to be in Christ signifies, to be a Member of Christ's Church, which is his Body: Called so, because all Christians depend upon Christ, for spiritual Aid and Assistance, as much as the Members in the Body do upon the Head; and the Branches for Sap and Life upon the Tree.

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But the Members of Christ's Church being Twofold, therefore there is accordingly a Twofold abiding or being in Christ.

1. In *Outward* Profession only, as our Saviour, *John* 15. vers. 20. supposes some Branches to be in him, which bear no Fruit; thereby signifying those Christians which are in the Church, and profess to believe in Christ, but do not bring forth the fruit of Holiness, and good Works. And in this Sense, many, nay, the generality of Christians are in Christ, but are not new Creatures, do not abide in Christ, and Christ doth not abide in them by his Spirit; but are withered Branches (vers. 2, and 6.) to be cut off, and cast into the Fire.

(2.) To be in Christ signifies to be a true, real, and living Member of Christ's Church, and to be such Branches of this mystical Vine, as bring forth much Fruit. Of which Kind of Christians also it is said in Scripture, that they are not only *in Christ*, but that *Christ is in them*, as the Soul is in the Body; that he is joyn'd unto them, as the Head to the Members; and that he is in them, as the Root or Body of the Tree is in the Branches, which are sustain'd and upheld by it, and derive Sap and Nourishment from it. And in this Sense they are in Christ, and Christ is in them; who bring forth the following Fruits or Effects.

1. Who acknowledge him to be their King, and Lawgiver, and live under his Authority

and Laws, as Members of his Kingdom, submitting unto, and obeying him as their Owner, Lord, and Governor. For in this sense Christ is said to be the *Head* of the Church; that is, the Authoritative Head, which rules and governs it; and the Church is said to be his *Body*, by a Metaphor from the Body Politick, as it is under the Laws, Influences, and Government of the Head of it.

2. They who live in a constant dependance upon Christ; in a Sense of their own Weakness and Inabilities without him; and in an Acknowledgement that all the Spiritual Life is from him. *Abide in me, and I in you,* (says our Saviour, *John* 15. 4,--7.) *as the branch cannot bear fruit of it self, except it abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing.* Where the bringing forth the Fruit of good Works is attributed to the abiding so in Christ, who is the Vine, as to depend on him alone for Power and Ability to perform our Duty. And so *John* 6. 56, 57. a constant Dependance upon Christ for Spiritual Life is described by Christ's *Dwelling*, that is, being and abiding in us, and we in him.

3. True Christians are said in Scripture to be in Christ, upon account that their Human Nature is in him; that he had like Passions and Infirmities with them, Sin only excepted; that the Punishment of their Sins was upon him; that they are crucified, dead, and buried

ried as to this World with him; and shall be raised, and sit together with him in Heavenly Places; that they have the same Graces, and shall be Partakers of the same Glory with him; and are in God's Account as one Person with him.

4. They are peculiarly said to be, and to abide in Christ, and he in them, who are made Partakers of his Nature; who have his Spirit, or the same Holy Temper and Dispositions of Mind or Spirit, which were in him, and are prescribed by his Gospel. Let this Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, says the Apostle, *Phil. 2. 5.* that is, be of the same Spirit, and Temper of Mind with him, in all holy Habits, and gracious Dispositions.

And hereby Christ is in a Christian of a Truth, he is *formed in him*, as the Scripture speaks, a *Spiritual* Christ, as it were consisting of Gifts and Graces, as of Members, and grows up into a new Creature in his Soul.

5. They are most peculiarly said to be in Christ who truly love him; and Christ is most peculiarly said to be in them, who are beloved by him. For by an usual Metaphor, whereby bodily Things are transferr'd to Spiritual, the Mind also is said to be, or dwell in a thing, when it is wholly intent upon it; and the Soul to be there, where its Desires and Affections are. *Amans est ubi amat;*

The Soul is in its beloved Object rather than in the Body, and (if I may make use of a paronomastical Allusion, which are not uncommon in Scripture) *it is more where it loves, than where it lives.* Whereupon (*John* 14. 20, 21. 1 *John* 2. 4, -6.) obedience to God's Commands, out of a Principle of *Love*, is given as a Sign, whereby we are to know that we are in God, and in Christ, and he in us.

Now, as Love in general is a mutual Complacence in, and Gratification of each other, founded upon likeness of Tempers, and virtuous Interests; from whence proceeds such an excellent Sympathy and Harmony betwixt Souls, that as in Musical Instruments wound up to the same height, what strikes the one, moves the other; so accordingly the Divine Love betwixt God and holy Souls (of which Natural, Moral, Virtuous Love, is an admirable resemblance) consists not in extatick Raptures, and the devout Effects of a warm, and an exalted Fancy; but in having the same holy Dispositions which were in Christ, and which God the Fountain of Holiness requires of us; and in having the same Interests, Ends, and Designs which Christ had; *viz.* the promoting of his Father's Glory, and universal Righteousness. And as Men who truly love one another, strive to do whatsoever is grateful and acceptable to each other; so do all who love God, strive to perform his
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Commands; because such Obedience is grateful unto him, and is according to his good Will and Pleasure. And as they love God and Christ, so on the contrary are they beloved by them; for they dwell in and with them (as the Scripture speaks) by gracious Communications; by the Divine Principle of a holy Life: God loves us, because we are his Children, and are like him in Holy, Heavenly, and Godlike Qualities of Mind; and we love him because he is a perfect Being, and therefore amiable and lovely in his own most glorious Nature, and hath loved us, and made us like himself. And in this consists the mutual Love betwixt God and pious Souls; and betwixt Christ and true Christians, describ'd in Scripture, especially St. *John* 17. by the exalted Expressions of their being in each other, even as the Father and the Son are in each other; and of being one in them, even as they are one: Whereby the most intimate Union of Love and Affection betwixt God and Christians is set out unto us, and of Christians to each other; such as may make them be said to have the *same Mind* and *Spirit*, and so to be in each other as to become *One*.

The Apostle (*Rom.* 8. 1.) tells us, that they are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, *but after the Spirit*; that is, as the Apostle immediately explains himself, *after*

the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus; after that lively and vital Spirit of Holiness and Righteousness, which was in him, and he imparts unto us. And let the *same Mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus*, saith the same Apostle to the *Philippians*: And what was that Mind and Spirit, but a Spirit of Love to all Men, even his Enemies; a Spirit of Meekness and Humility; a Spirit of Zeal for his Father's Glory and Service, and of the most profound Condescension, and Resignation to his Will; a Spirit not only of Prayer, and Supplications, and of other Religious Performances; but of Universal Holiness and Rectitude, in all the inward Faculties of his Soul, his Understanding, Will, and Affections, which were actuated with a Divine Principle, and moved in a perfect Conformity to his Father's Will.

Would you know then, whether you are in Christ Jesus, why, try your selves by the Spirit and Temper of Mind which was in him; and although you cannot arrive to the same Measure and Degrees of Spirit which was in him; yet see whether you have not the same kind of Temper and Mind with him.

Have you then a Disposition to Peace, and a Spirit of Love; do you seek after it, and pursue it, and endeavour as much as in you lies to be at peace with all Men? Are you kind, gentle, and easie to be entreated, and dif-

disposed to receive your Enemies with as much tenderness as Christ did repenting Sinners; who, according to the Tenor of the most affectionate Parable of the returning Prodigal, went out to meet them whilst they were afar off, and yet on the Way, and receiv'd them with the most tender Endearments; and who call'd *Judas* by the gentle Name of *Friend*, even when he came to betray him; and died praying even for his Murtherers?

Have you a Spirit of *Zeal* for God's Service? Why, then you have the same Spirit or Mind which was in Christ Jesus. *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up*, says *David*, in the Person of our Saviour: The concern he had for God's Glory even wasted his Body, and consumed his vital Spirits; which he neglected to repair, and left his Meat and his Drink to perform his Father's Will; which was his Meat and Drink indeed, and more agreeable and natural to him than his necessary Food and Sustenance.

Have you therefore a prudent Zeal for God's Honour, and for the Salvation of Souls? and do you labour to promote Holiness in your selves, and in others? and do you discourage Vice by your Authority; by your Counsel; and by your own Example? Have you a Zeal for the common Interest of Religion? Do you Mourn with those that Mourn? Do you compassionate the
Afflictions

Afflictions of the Church, and the Divisions of it? Do you mourn in secret for your distressed Brethren, who now groan under the Yoke of Tyranny, Idolatry, and Persecution? and do you now especially pray in that most excellent and pious Prayer of the Church, for their Deliverance, with deep Sighs, and hearty Affections, saying, *How long, Lord, shall thy Anger burn, for ever? How long wilt thou forget thy People? O let the Cry of the Blood of thy Saints, and the sighing of the Prisoners come before thee!* Do you not only find fault with what is amiss in God's Church; but do you heartily wish and affectionately pray, that God would purge all his Churches from their Dregs, and make them meet for a glorious Deliverance; and that the Kingdom of his dear Son may come quickly?

Again: The Spirit of Christ was a Spirit of Prayer and Supplications. For he was wont to rise up a great while before Day, to pour forth his Soul before God; and sometimes continu'd whole Nights in Devotion. I do not think indeed that they, who have not the same Measure of Grace which he had, are able to imitate him in this, and other of his Actions; but yet, it must be confess'd, that more may be done by all than is done; and that we are to press forward towards Perfection with all our Power, and all our Might. Do you then take Pleasure

in this holy Exercise? Do you love to enjoy spiritual Communion and sacred Intercourse with God in it? Do you often retire to pray in Secret, and are you constant in offering up your Morning and Evening Sacrifice unto him? Have you the Spirit of Prayer? that is, have you inward Dispositions of Soul suitable to the several Parts of it? Do you exercise Acts of Sorrow at the Confession of Praise and Thanksgiving, at the Psalms and Hymns; and do you pour forth not Words only, but your Souls before God? Do you endeavour after the Gift, as well as the Grace of Prayer; and do you commit to Memory as much of Scripture as you can to this purpose, that so you may approach God with acceptable Words; for he is in Heaven, and we upon Earth; and therefore our Words ought to be *few*, that is, fit, chosen, and acceptable ones.

Have you (*Lastly*,) a Spirit of *Universal Holiness*? Are you not partial in your Obedience to God; but have you a respect unto all his Commandments, in the several Instances of your Duty towards God, your Neighbour, and your own Souls? Are you upright in your Duty to your Neighbours, as well as in your religious Performances towards God? Do you hate, as God does, a false Ballance, and deceitful Weights; and are you true to your Word and Promises, although they may prove to your own hurt?

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Are you strictly Temperate and Sober? and are you so free from unchast Actions, that you keep you selves from any consent to sinful Imaginations; and permit not your Fancy to dwell upon them when they are unwillingly injected into your Minds by Satan and outward Objects? And do you carefully avoid all Words and Jestings which are not convenient; and every thing which may tend to the exciting Evil in your own and other Mens Minds? Do you labour after the Purification and Sanctification of your Hearts; are they upright and sincere before God; and does your Conscience tell you that they are so? Do you take diligent Care to cleanse those Issues of Life or Death, and to recover the Image of God upon your Souls in Righteousness and true Holiness? Why then you may, in an humble Confidence, believe that you are so in Christ, as to become new Creatures, and that your old Things are passing away, and that all Things shall become new; and that you shall so live in Christ, as to die in him too. Blessed are they which *die in the Lord*, said the Voice from Heaven, *Revel. 14. 13.* that is, who have so liv'd in Christ, or according to his Doctrine and Example, as to be found in him at their departure out of this World, to die in his Love and Favour; and in a Spirit and Temper of Mind like that in which he dy'd: For as there is an Art of Living well in Christ, so is there an
Art

Art of Dying well in him too; with an entire Resignation to God's Will, a Contempt of this World, and an earnest and vigorous Expectation and Desire of a Dissolution of this our earthly Tabernacle, that we may be cloathed with an House from Heaven, and that we may be with God and Christ in their Glory. For Christ gave up the Ghost after an extraordinary manner, making a voluntary Oblation of himself without the usual Convulsions of Body, and Reluctancies of Mind; and his Departure was not so much Death, (which is a violent Divorce of Soul and Body) as an *Ascent* of the Soul to God, and a resigning and committing of himself into the Hands of his Father.

Now, altho' those who die in Christ cannot expect to die in the Lord, in all the same Circumstances as Christ did; yet we all ought to die according to his Example and Precepts, in perfect Charity, in Faith, in Hope, in a Resignation of our selves to God. We are to die in his Patience, and as they dy'd who have kept the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus. And then we may in an humble Confidence lift up our Heads with Joy, and expect to hear that joyful Voice from Heaven: *Blessed are the Dead, which die in the Lord: Yea, saith the Spirit, they rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them; their Works which they did in Christ here will follow them into his Glory hereafter.*



SERMON XXVII.

A New Creature.

2 COR. V. 17.

Therefore if any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.

IN these Words we have not only the reciprocal Union betwixt Christ and Christians; but also the *Result* and Effect of it, in *Newness* of Life. Of the First, I have but lately discours'd unto you, and shewn, what it is to be in Christ: I proceed now to the second Thing to be consider'd in these Words of the Apostle, --- *He is a new Creature.*

This Phrase is taken from the Old Testament (as those of the New usually are) wherein we read (1 Sam. 10. 6, 9. Ps. 51. 12. Isa. 43. 14,--21. Ezek. 11. 19.) of *Saul's* being *another Man*, and having *another Heart*, and a *New Spirit*; and of God's *creating* and *forming anew* the People of *Israel*: And this Expression, with others of the

the like import, are frequent in the New Testament, especially in our Saviour's Discourse with *Nicodemus* about Regeneration, or the Birth of this *new Creature*. In order to the better understanding of which, it is to be consider'd; That fal'n and corrupted Nature, together with all the fleshly Lusts which arise from an actual Consent to its Suggestions, are call'd in Scripture the *old Man*: Because original Concupiscence, the Root and Spring of all Evil, is propagated from the first and old Man *Adam*, and renders Human Nature feeble and unactive; and every one that comes into the World, as weak of himself, and as indisposed to Good, as that Man is to Action, who is loaden with all the Infirmities and diseases of old Age.

Whereupon corrupt, and sinful Nature, and the wicked Conversation, in which the generality of the Word indulged themselves before the Preaching of the Gospel, is represented in Scripture as an old Man, with sinful *Members*, and a *Body* of Sin about him: And on the contrary, the Heavenly Nature, and the holy Dispositions and Habits, which Christ, the Second, and *new Adam*, imparts out of his own fulness unto Christians, are call'd the *new Man*, and the *new Creature*; and their Conversion, a New, or second Birth, proceeding from a new Spiritual Principle, deriv'd from above, or from God; in Opposition to the fleshly Principle of their Old,
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and first Birth, propagated from our first Parents; which also, in regard of its long Continuance in the World, may be call'd Old.

And a Christian justify'd and sanctify'd by Union to Christ, through Faith and Love, is said to be a new Creature, upon these two Accounts.

1. Because of the *new Principle* of Conversion, or converting Grace and spiritual Life, he receives thereby from Christ.

2. Because of the *new Tempers*, and Dispositions of Mind, he is thereby made partaker of.

And (1.) because of the *new Principle* of Spiritual Life he receiv'd from Christ.

When God formed Man out of the Dust of the Earth, the Clayie Image was at first without Motion and Life; and when he breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life (*Gen. 1. 26, 27. Chap. 2. 7. 1 Cor. 15. 44,--51. Eph. 4. 24. Coloss. 3. 10. Rom. 8.*) he was only a *living Soul*, and had not a *quickning Spirit*, until God bestow'd upon him supernatural Graces, in which the Divine Image chiefly consists. And thus the carnal, and natural Man (as the Scripture speaks) begotten in Man's own Likeness, and after his own Image (*Gen. 5. 3.*) derives only a natural Life, and sinful Inclinations from his Parents; but has not a quickning Spirit until he is united unto Christ, and enliven'd by him, the Fountain and Spring of all

all Heavenly Life. The Scripture represents (*Eph. 2. 4, 5.*) all Men in their natural, and carnal State, as *Dead*; not only because they are dead in actual Trespasses and Sins; but because they are dead in Law, lying under the Sentence of Condemnation denounc'd against *Adam*, and in him against all his Posterity; and because they are depriv'd of God's Grace, and of his Favour, which is the Life of the Soul: For as natural Death consists in the separation of the Soul from the Body; so does spiritual Death consist in the separation of the Soul from God. And therefore that they may be alive to God, they are to receive a spiritual, quickning, and heavenly Principle into their Souls, by their Union to God through Christ. Our Saviour (*John 1. 12, 13. and Ch. 3.*) calls this Principle, *Spirit*, and describes the Genealogy of the new Creature, after a most sublime Manner, calling them the *Sons of God*, and declaring that they are born *not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*; that is, that they derive not their Pedigree, nor boast of their Descent from the *Blood* of rich, powerful, or ancient Ancestors, as the *Jews* were wont to do of theirs from *Abraham*; but from the Blood of the Son of God, shed for them, and imputed unto them; and were begotten not after a *natural* Manner, or by the Power of their own free Will, or any human Art or Persuasion; but by the Power of God's Grace, and by his Spirit.

The *Spiritual Life* is call'd so, from the Proportion it bears to the Natural, which is in many things very remarkable. For Naturalists observe, that the first Principles of Life, have something incorporeal and Divine in them, by which the dull Matter is mov'd and enliven'd, and enabled to perform what is beyond and above its own Power and Capacity; infomuch that a sagacious ^a Naturalist confesses, that Life is produced after so wonderful a Manner, as if the Omnipotent God had said, *Let there be Life, and it was so.* And is not our Spiritual Life of a Divine Original? Does it not raise the Pious and Holy Soul above it self, and enable it to do things beyond its natural Power and Capacities?

Again; the sensible Beginnings of natural Life are *small*, and almost contemptible; that the greatness of God, its principal Author, might appear by the meanness of the Instruments he makes use of; and the imperfect Substance proceeds from Life, to Sense; and its Members are form'd by degrees one after another; but with more than ordinary speed, force and vigor, when once (as an excellent Person hath observ'd) the Blood hath made its Passage through the *Heart*. And are not the beginnings of Spiritual Life ordinarily very small, and scarce discernible by us? Do we not grow in Grace at first, as in Stature,

^a *Harvey de Generat.*

by insensible Degrees; and even when we live in Christ, have but little Sense, and Experience of it; until God is pleas'd to communicate himself powerfully unto our Hearts? Then the Divine Birth is form'd by quick and strong Motions, and the enlivening Spirit diffuses it self with wonderful force and swiftness through all the ruder and unshapen Dispositions of the Soul; and the new Creature sensibly finds, and experiences its growth in Grace, by the new Tempers and Habits of his Mind. The next Thing to be consider'd.

(2.) When the Spirit comes to be a constant Inhabitant in the Soul, and appears to be so by the *Effects* and Fruits of it; then is he a new Creature indeed; he has new Propensions, Qualities, and Tempers of Mind; his old Things are pass'd away, and, behold, all Things in him *are become New*. For God proposes unto him new Objects, new Exercises, new Rewards, a new Light illuminates his Understanding, and in the Light of God doth he see Light; a Spiritual Life actuates his Will; and his Affections are wing'd and moved with Holy and Heavenly Things. And even his bodily Members, which were conceiv'd in Sin, and shapen in Iniquity, now become Servants to Righteousness unto Holiness. It is said in Scripture (1 Sam. 10. 6, 9.) concerning *Saul*, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, that he was another Man, and that God gave him

another Heart ; that he had the Spirit of Wisdom and Magnanimity, Heroick and Kingly Qualities of Mind, and was every way fitted for the Station in which God had placed him. But on the contrary we read, that when God departed from him, that he became again the former old Man ; his Temper was quite changed, black Envy, and bloody Revenge possess'd his Mind ; he was disquieted and tormented, and his Actions were like those of a distracted Man : And even *David's* Temper of Mind grew mean, dejected, and servile, after his grievous Sins, so that he earnestly pray'd, that God would *create in him a clean Heart*, uphold him with his *free Spirit*, and restore unto him the *Joy of his Salvation* ; that is, give him his former chearful, and vigorous Temper, the Effect of God's Spirit ; and free him from the Bondage of Sin, and the Slavery of Lust and Revenge.

But on the contrary, when a Man becomes a new Creature, he has another Heart, and another Soul ; he has not the same Thoughts, and Sense of Things, which he formerly had ; and his Mind is set upon quite different Objects. All his Fear is then lest he should displease God ; his Anger is turn'd against Sin, and commences *Zeal* for his Neighbour's good, the Salvation of his own, and other Mens Souls, and the promoting of God's Glory. His Sorrow is chang'd into *Repentance* ; or if, through a happy Constitution, he enjoy'd

joy'd a natural Calmness of Temper, and a chearful Disposition, he finds even that by Degrees sanctify'd, and advanc'd into *Peace* of Conscience, and *Joy* in the Holy Ghost, grounded upon God's Love in Christ, his precious Rewards and Promises, and the Experience of the good Fruits of the Spirit grown up in his Soul. His natural Affection, and neighbourly Love is exalted into *Christian Charity*; that is, into Love of his Neighbour, as a Brother, and Fellow Member in Christ; as a common Partaker of God's Image; as one for whom Christ died, and left as a Legacy to the mutual Love and Care of Christians, when, not long before his Death, he gave a *new* Commandment unto them, that they should love one another, *even as he* had loved them.

Whereupon, according to those excellent Precepts of the Gospel, (which if well practised, the Christian World might be of one Accord, and of one Mind) in Honour they prefer one another; do nothing thro' Strife and Vain-glory, but in lowliness of Mind each esteems others better than themselves; and look not every one on their own things, but every one also on the Things of others. And not only his Soul and Spirit, but his *Body* is sanctified too: His very *Eyes*, which before roved after vain, and unlawful Objects; and were full of Envy, Lust, or Adultery, now, according to the Wise Man's Advice,

Prov. 4. 25. *Look right on,* and streight before him; he maketh a Covenant with them, and letteth not his Heart walk after his Eyes; but shutteth them from seeing Evil. *Job* 31. 1. *Isa.* 33. 15. Nay, he afflicts them for their former Impurities with Tears of Repentance; employs them in Reading of God's Word; and he heartily begs of God, with the holy Psalmist, that he would turn them away from seeing of Vanity. His *Tongue*, that unruly Member, which before flattered, deceived, backbited, boasted of great Things, was insolent, mischievous, defiled the Body, and set on fire the Course of Nature, is now tam'd and bridled; utters no unchast Word, gives no opprobrious Language, and speaks nothing which is not convenient; but employs it self in praying to God, or in advising, and instructing others; and he takes great Care, that no corrupt Communication proceed out of his Mouth; but that which is good to the use of Edifying; and that his Speech may be always with Grace, season'd with Salt, that he may know how to answer every Man, that is, he may speak pertinently, and wisely, and utter such gracious Words, as may perswade others, and convince them, that he hath good and gracious Dispositions in his Heart. In a Word, the new Creature, or the new Convert, has a sincere Respect unto all God's Commandments, not only his natural and moral Laws, but especially those repeated in Scripture,

pture, which he takes to be the chief Rule, and Measure of his Actions; and endeavours to perform them to the utmost of his Power and Abilities, with these Qualifications.

(1.) Whatsoever he doth, he does *heartily* as to God, from an inward Principle of Love to him; and not only from outward Motives and Considerations, but from a hearty Sense of his infinite Goodness, and Perfections; and the Reasonableness, Purity, and Holiness of his Laws. Fear of Punishment is indeed most commonly the first Step to Repentance; and is a good, but imperfect beginning of Spiritual Life; or is rather the Labour and Pangs of the new Birth, than any Part of the Child, and Son of God, brought forth by it. For the new Convert, or the Spiritual Man, especially when grown in Grace, and come to some Maturity in it, performs God's Will *from his Heart*, and inward Affections; his Obedience is rather *Love*, than Subjection; and is not Tribute paid out of Constraint of God, but voluntary Returns of the Life, and Love he gave him. For the Fountain of Spiritual Life is placed by God in the Heart; this is the Altar of that *sacred Fire*; and he who gives God his Heart, offers the most acceptable Sacrifice unto him. Are your Actions then not only Warm, but *Vital*; have they Life, as well as Heat? Is the Principle of them *within* you, and do they flow from it, as from a perpetual Spring, and a Fountain

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of Living Water? For as the Body may be moved by outward Agents, and even by an inward Principle, yet not as from a Soul informing and enlivening it: So may the Soul be moved to good Actions by outward Motives, by worldly Interest, by good Education, by Custom, by Fear of others, and even many good Things may be done upon inward Motives and Considerations, which yet soon fade, and die, because they proceed not from the Heart and Affections possess'd with a Spiritual Principle, receiv'd by *Faith*, and working by *Love*, which is the very *Spirit* of the Soul, and affords a constant supply of Life to it.

(2.) The new Creature has God's Glory for the chief, and ultimate End of all his Actions; not his own Interest or Reputation, Vain-glory and Applause, or some meaner Concern of this Life, if any such can be. He accounts God the Supream Good, and the Supream End of all Things; and does what is good, because God, who is Goodness, commands it; because it is agreeable to his Will, tends to his Honour and Glory, to the Spiritual Good of his Soul here, and the Eternal Happiness of it hereafter.

For want of this Principle a Man may perform some good Actions, and yet be all the while an Hypocrite, or at least a moral and *natural* Man; who are distinguish'd from the *Spiritual*, by the *Manner*, Ends, and Designs of
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of their Actions, more than the *Matter* of them; the same Action being perform'd by both, but from a different *Principle*, and to a different *End*. As for Example, the Natural, and Moral Man is Temperate, because it is for his Health, Reputation, or Advantage: but the Spiritual Man is Temperate not only nor chiefly for these Reasons, but because he thereby obeys, pleases, honours God, the Supream Lord and Giver of all the Creatures, who has charged us to use them moderately; and because it fits him for Prayer, and Spiritual Exercises, and for sacred Communion with God: Whereas Intemperance defiles the Soul, clouds it with fumes of Sensuality, and quenches the good Spirit of God, which departs from an impure Soul.

(Lastly,) The new Creature performs all his Actions in a Sense of his own Weakness, and utter inability to do good of himself and of the Necessity of God's Grace through Christ.

These two last Qualifications were wanting to the good Actions of the Heathens; but are necessary to the Acceptance of a Christian before God. For he who acts not to God's Glory, does not design his Actions to their proper End; and he who thinks that he needs only Nature and Reason, and not the Grace of Christ to assist him, is not a Christian. But the new Creature may say with the Apostle (the Sense of which I cannot tell, whether I fully comprehend, or no) in those
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sublime and exalted Expressions (*Gal. 2. 20.*) *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: And the Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God.* As if he had said; Did I say, *I live*; let me correct myself, it is not I that live a Life of Holiness, but *Christ* that liveth in me, by a Divine Principle of Life, which is the Essence and Being of my Spiritual Life; and by constant Emanations of Strength and Grace, which are the Powers, and Abilities of it. *In God* I live, and move, and have my *natural Being*; *in Christ* I live, and move, and have my *Spiritual Being*: And even my natural Life, the Life I live in the Flesh, is order'd by a Principle of Faith in Christ; I live in a Reliance, and dependance on him; and whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I, or rather Christ in me, do all to God's Glory, and that I may be capacitated for his Service.

And may not such a Christian be truly call'd a new Creature? And would not one think, that he had new Faculties of Soul, as well as new Qualities and Dispositions; and that God had form'd him a-new out of some nobler Materials, than the Dust of the Ground, and had breathed into him a *new Breath* of Life? And indeed the Scripture advances him into a higher Rank of Beings, calling him the Spiritual Man; and describing him as consisting not barely of *Body* and *Soul*, but *Spirit* too.

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It was the Opinion of *Plato*, that Divine Philosopher, that Wisdom and Virtue are of themselves so amiable, that if the Ideas of them could be *incorporated*, and appear to Human Sight, they would necessarily attract the Love of all Men. And what is the new Creature but Virtue, and Wisdom sanctified, and exalted into Christian Grace ; advanced into some higher Instances and Degrees of Duty, proceeding from higher Principles, and acting to higher Ends and Designs. And is it less lovely in a Christian Dress; and does not even the faint resemblance of it, as I have very imperfectly laid it before you, excite some Degrees of Love and Admiration in all your Hearts; and does not even the most profligate Sinner, at least wish that he were a new Creature? Even *Balaam* wish'd that he might die the Death of the Righteous; and there are few of the most profane Sinners, who do not wish upon their Death-Beds, that their last End might be like theirs. O do not defer that Wish to your gasping Breath; but endeavour to live betimes the Life of the Righteous; for your last Wishes will be otherwise vain, and fruitless. And may it please God so to unite us by his Spirit to Christ here, through Faith and Love, that we may bring forth the Fruits of his Spirit; and be united to God and Christ, in his Eternal Kingdom hereafter.



SERMON XXVIII.

Of Perfection in Christ.

Ad Clerum.

A VISITATION SERMON.

COLOSS. I. 28.

*That we may present every Man perfect in
Christ Jesus.*

2 TIM. III. 17.

*That the Man of God may be perfect, thorough-
ly furnished unto all good Works.*



THESE Words, together with the Context, contain a Commendation of the Holy Scriptures, and of Holy Education according to them. Which if timely, and gradually continued in, will prove so profitable, as to produce its true Effect, Wisdom unto Salvation; and its desired End, Christian Perfection and Accomplishment, for the Performance of all Duties requir'd of us.

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In order to the inforcing the great Truth contain'd in my Text, I shall endeavour to shew these three Things :

I. What that *Perfection* is, which the Scriptures require of a Man of God, that is, of every one who is *dedicated* to his Service, as all Christians are in Baptism; who are therefore call'd *Men of God* in Scripture, as well as those who are more *immediately* dedicated to his Service in the Ministry, and are upon a more eminent account call'd so.

II. What is meant by a *perfect Man* in Scripture.

III. What are the Scripture or Gospel Means for the attaining this Perfection; *for making the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works.*

First, By *Perfection* is meant not an absolute Perfection without Sin, which belongs only to the glorified Saints in Heaven; but such a one as is attainable by God's Grace, under the Gospel; consisting in the *higher Degrees of commanded Duties*; or of all those Graces of Godliness, Righteousness, and Sobriety, which as Parts constitute a Christian, and render him compleat or perfect in Parts, and accomplish'd in the Sight of God and Man; or according to the Apostolical Phrase (*James* 1. 4.) *Perfect* and entire, wanting nothing; but compleat in all the Will of God.
(*Col.*

(*Col.* 4. 12.) And although all sincere Christians do not attain to those higher Degrees of commanded Duties, yet all are oblig'd to *endeavour* after them; because the *highest* Degrees are *commanded*, although not under the Penalty of Damnation, if we fall short of them; and he who does not *endeavour* after *Perfection of Degrees*, will not be accounted by God to have *Perfection of Parts*, or to be compleat in *all* commanded Duties; nor to be a sincere, good, and faithful Servant, and Manager of the Talents committed unto him. Whence we are commanded to *grow in Grace* (*2 Pet.* 3. 18. *Eph.* 4. 15.) and to *grow up* into Christ in *all* Things, which is a Perfection of Degrees; and to be diligent to be found of Christ without Spot, and Blameless (*2 Pet.* 3. 14. *1 Pet.* 1. 16. *1 John* 2. 3. *Col.* 1. 12. *2 Cor.* 7. 1. *Phil.* 3. 12.) *continually* perfecting Holiness in the Fear of the Lord; following after it, and pressing forwards towards it; even to the highest Perfection of being Holy in all manner of Conversation, even as Christ is Holy; and perfect (but according to the Measure of a Man) even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. (*Matth.* 5. ult.)

This is the Mark, the End, the Prize of our high Calling, even the regaining of the lost Image of God, the Divine Nature, which we are all to attain in some Measure in this World; and are to be found endeavouring

vouring after the highest Measure attainable ; that so from the Effects wrought in us by Christ mightily working in us by his Spirit, (which the Apostle calls *Christ in us*) we may attain to the *Hope of Glory*, or a well-grounded Hope of attaining it ; and may at last be presented to God perfect and compleat in Christ Jesus, *Colos. 2. 12.* pardon'd for his Merits and Satisfaction, upon Repentance, and in a Righteousness perfectly gloriously wrought in us by his Spirit.

Now to come to my second Head. *A Perfect Man of God* according to Scripture (which yet is indeed more perfect in its Rule, or *Object*, than in Man its *Subject*) is one who has the great Work of Sanctification wrought so eminently in him, (*1 Thess. 5. 23.*) in his whole Man, *Spirit, Soul, and Body*, as that he will be accounted blameless at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and suffer little loss at that dreadful Day, *1 Cor. 3. 15.* This Scripture-Division might admit of a more nice enquiry, than I am willing to engage in at present ; and therefore I shall consider Man according to the commonly receiv'd Distribution of his several Parts and Faculties, and shew wherein his Perfection, with respect to each of them, consists, as to his *Body* and his *Soul*, his Understanding, Will, and Affections.

And (1.) A Gospel perfect Man, is one whose Mind is furnish'd with a large, full,
and

and methodical Knowledge of Divine Truths; those which are *useful*, as well as those which are *necessary* to Salvation: Integrity and Order being requisite to compleatness, or perfection of Divine Knowledge. For God made all Things in Number, Weight, and Measure, from whence the Divine Harmony of the whole Frame of Things results; and every divine *Truth*, even the *least*, is precious; and the Want of it is a Blemish, and a prejudice to a Christian: *All Scripture is profitable*, saith the Apostle; and God is the *God of Order, and not of Confusion*. Wisd. 11. 20. 2. *Tim.* 3. 16. 1 *Cor.* 13. 33, 40.

But as he hath a comprehensive orderly Knowledge of Divine Truths; so is he endow'd with *Wisdom* too; for he is *wise unto Salvation*; knowing how to make Use of his *general* Knowledge, and to *apply* it to *particular* Cases and Circumstances, for the Benefit of his own Soul, and the Souls and Consciences of others, as Occasion requires. And further, he not only understands all Divine Truths; but he truly *believes* them, with a certain, firm, and evident Assent, *grounded upon God's Authority*, and supported by many and cogent Reasons; especially those which *arise* from his *own Experience*: 'For as the Apostle speaks, he hath been *assured of them*, and hath attain'd *all riches of the full Assurance* of Understanding (2 *Tim.* 3. 14. *Col.* 2. 2.) For it is *Experience which worketh Hope*,

Hope, and Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us, Rom. 5. 4, 5. For when the Soul hath experienc'd the affecting, transforming Influences of Gospel-Truths, and, as the Psalmist experimentally speaks, hath *seen* and *tasted* how *True* and *Gracious* God is, according to his Promises made in Scripture; and by means and virtue of them; then its well-grounded *Faith* begins to commence *Sight*, gives a *Presence* to the *future* Things of the other World; and a *Reality* and *Substance* to what is unseen, and not perceivable by the Senses, *Psalms* 25. 10. 34. 8. 119. 142. 1 *Pet.* 2. 3.

This is an *Evidence* of a *Divine* Original, more powerful than any Demonstration; by virtue of which, the Soul *lives a Life of Faith*, continually advancing nearer towards God and Heaven, as from a firm Basis built upon a Rock, to the invisible Top of a lofty Pyramid. A happy Effect of a well-bought Experience; a Pearl of great, nay, of inestimable Price; and yet to be purchas'd at no dearer a Rate, than only the parting with what is our own, and not God's, that is, Sin, which is a Creature of our own making, our Shame, our Burthen, and our Disease.

But, (2dly,) His *Will* and Affections are guided by this sanctify'd, *experimental* Knowledge of his Mind or Understanding; and

and methodical Knowledge of Divine Truths; those which are *useful*, as well as those which are *necessary* to Salvation: Integrity and Order being requisite to compleatness, or perfection of Divine Knowledge. For God made all Things in Number, Weight, and Measure, from whence the Divine Harmony of the whole Frame of Things results; and every divine *Truth*, even the *least*, is precious; and the Want of it is a Blemish, and a prejudice to a Christian: *All Scripture is profitable*, saith the Apostle; and God is the *God of Order, and not of Confusion*. Wisd. 11. 20. 2. Tim. 3. 16. 1 Cor. 13. 33, 40.

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But, (2dly,) His *Will* and *Affections* are guided by this sanctify'd, *experimental* Knowledge of his Mind or Understanding; and

act not blindly nor irregularly. His fixed resolved Will hath attain'd such a powerful Inclination to God, its chief ultimate End, and such a promptitude and readiness to be subject to, and obey his Will; and his Affections are possess'd with such a sober, but yet such a lively Fervour for their several Offices and Ends, as sufficiently argue, that the Divine Nature is become habitual to the Soul, and the Acts of it as it were natural and necessary. A happy Loss of a slavish Liberty to Sin; a Service which is perfect Freedom, a blessed Determination to Good, *approaching* to that which the Angels and Saints *perfectly* enjoy in Heaven.

(3dly,) The sanctified Understanding and Will with its Affections, being replenish'd with holy Divine Light and Love, have also a *Vital Activity* from God, who is *Life* as well as Light and Love; in the Impressions from which threefold or Tri-une Influx upon the Soul, the Image of God, the Tri-une Being chiefly consists. By virtue of this Vitality (which appears eminently by its Effects in this Work, altho' the whole threefold Influx concurs) there is a sacred internal Communion maintain'd in the Soul. Which is a holy Intercourse, by way of a kind of *Circular Motion* (as one speaks) betwixt the Soul and God, consisting in God's giving Grace to Man, and Man's returning it again in Love and Duty. *The true perpetual*

tual Motion, which having an everlasting Cause, must needs have an everlasting Duration; the true Felicity and Perfection of the Soul, arising from its Vital Union with God, its chief, ultimate End. For in this Case, God gives a large Measure of his Spirit to the immortal Soul, which he had before prepar'd by lesser degrees for receiving it; and the Soul, when it hath receiv'd it by *Faith*, the Chief of the *receiving* Graces, immediately concurs or co-operates *with* God's Grace (but *under* it, and in Subordination to it) making a quick return of it to God, in Gratitude, Praise, Thanksgiving and *Love*, the Chief of the *returning* Graces. As the Glass fitted for receiving the Sun-Beams, reflects them immediately back again with Heat: Or as in Sight, the Sun transmits its Beams of Light to the Eye, and the Eye emits its Lucid Spirits to concur with them; which mutual Concurrence (in which Sight consists) is a kind of a *natural Communion* betwixt them, illustrating the *spiritual Communion*. For God hath vouchsafed us some Adumbrations of himself, and of his spiritual Operations in the Works of Nature; which are as Footsteps of God impress'd upon the Creature; the Consideration of which is a part of *True Christian Philosophy*.

But, (4^{thly}.) Besides this internal *Communion* with God and Christ (rendred in Scri-

pture, but perhaps too familiarly, *Fellowship*, 1 Joh. 1.) maintain'd in *the Spirit of the renewed Mind* (Ephes. 4. 23.) or the inmost Recess or Center of the Soul, the most perfect Christian experiences also a kind of another *reciprocal Motion* betwixt the *Soul* and the *Body*; or a kind of holy Communion betwixt the inward and outward Man, as the Scriptures speak: The Soul exciting the Body to holy Actions; and the Body returning again some of its receiv'd Vigour to the Soul; which is one Reason of external bodily Worship, and of the several Gestures used in it. And by this means also the more perfect Man eats, and drinks, and makes use of the Creatures to *God's Glory*; for he not only designs to nourish and strengthen his Body by them, that it may be a fit Instrument for the Soul, but also conveys to the Soul some of the Delight and Pleasure which he finds in the Creature; by not suffering it to stop altogether in the Senses and sensitive Appetite (which is a kind of Idolatry, or a making of a *God of his Belly*) but using it as a Means or Occasion to excite in his Soul the holy Graces of Praise and Thanksgiving to God for the Goodness he hath communicated to his Creatures. For as the Artist in touching the outward Keys of an Organ, or such like Musical Instrument, designs thereby not only to excite an inward Harmony in the Instrument itself, but that it should also be transmitted
outwardly

outwardly in melodious Sounds, to affect the Hearers: So doth the Compleat Christian transmit the Pleasure which affects the outward Senses to the inward, and from them to the Soul; which having receiv'd it, is to transmit it again spiritualized and sanctified to the Body, to enable it to perform *outward* Actions to God's Glory. But in this Matter, we are to observe these Two Things.

First, That *outward* Actions, *good in themselves*, or agreeable to the particular Laws of God commanding them, which is their *material Goodness*, want part of their *formal Goodness*, except they take their Original from an inward Principle; which is the regular Process of good Actions; according to that Harmony God hath constituted in Man; that the inferiour Faculties should be govern'd by the Superiour, and the Superiour by the Spirit of God; the first Mover in all Actions savingly good, without which the most exquisite outward Conversation and Deportment, and the most useful good Actions want one principal Part of their Goodness.

And we are to observe (Secondly,) that it may be some considerable Time before internal Communion with God may display it self outwardly in Actions of any more than ordinary Perfection and Excellency, and be

able to diffuse its Light to such due Advantage, that Men by seeing its Works may glorify God, the chief End of outward Actions, and one chief part of their formal Goodness; to do good Actions from a Spiritual Principle attained by Faith in Christ, and by Prayer. As Plants and Trees first imbibe the Virtue of the Sun, and reflect its Heat; and there is a Circulation of their inward Sap, before they bring forth Fruit, or even Leaves, and spreading Branches, for Ornament and Defence. But let such a Soul carefully watch the tender Plants, and by continual soft Breathings of Prayer and Meditation, cherish the small Spark of Life, for it may at last break out into a holy Flame, by the breathings of God's Spirit.

But because inward Acts are in *order to outward*; therefore is a Man under such Circumstances to do all the outward Good he can, altho' but imperfectly, according to the Measure he hath received, and constantly endeavour to advance to the fuller Character of a compleat Christian; to wit, of one whose *whole* Man, *outward* as well as *inward*, Body as well as Soul, is *regular*, and regularly *Active*, which is the more perfect State.

For the compleat Christian, by long Use and holy Violence, hath gain'd the true Regularity of his Body, or *outward* Man; consisting not only in a regular Behaviour, according to the Rules of Civility and Decency,

cy, and good Manners (the *Parva Moralia*, or *smaller Morals*, as the Platonists call them) but also in a regular, ready, and fervent use of his Senses, sensitive Appetite, and bodily Members, according to God's Will, and to God's Glory, and from the Spiritual Principle in him, transfusing as it were some of its Virtue into the Body. Thus not only the extraordinary Glory transfused it self into *Moses's* Face, and through the very Raiment of our Blessed Saviour, at his extraordinary Transfiguration; and the Wisdom, and Spirit of *Stephen* by which he spake, made his Face appear, even to his Enemies, as the Face of an Angel; (*Exod.* 34. 30. *Matth.* 28. 3. *Act.* 6. 10, 15.) But even ordinary Wisdom (as the Wise Man speaks, *Eccles.* 8. 1.) sometimes *maketh a Man's Face to shine*; and when the Soul burns with holy Love, affecting the whole Man regularly, but fervently, he seems to experience some Sort of an *ordinary Transfiguration* (if I may so speak) some earnest, and Fore-tasts of his future Glory. By this the Memory is sanctified, and all things necessary are brought to its Remembrance; and the Imagination, or Fancy, is purified, and reduced to a just regularity; both which were before full of unruly, vain Thoughts, and of false Images transmitted from the World, the Senses, and corrupt Reason; and of Impressions from the Tempter, who often retires into the Fancy,

as into his proper Seat, and strongest Fortrefs, even when he is beaten out of the other Faculties; molesting Men after divers Manners, according to their different Constitutions and Circumstances; some with terrifying Thoughts; others with trifling, pleasing and diverting, but unprofitable ones. Now it is a great part of the Task, and Perfection of a compleat Christian, to draw off his Thoughts from all undue Objects by the Power of a sanctify'd Will; and to impress new ones upon the Fancy, by the Power of a sanctify'd Understanding; and to have a due Government over his outward Senses, those Inlets of Sin, his sensitive Appetite and Passions; and even such a Command over the Members of his Body, as that his Hands may be ready to be lifted up in Prayer; his Mouth and Tongue to praise God; and the whole Man stand ready, as an Instrument tuned by God's Spirit, to receive and obey its Motions, and Commands.

This holy *David* tells us, that not only his *Heart* (Psal. 63. to 84, 2.) but even his *Flesh*, did thirst, and long after the living God; and St. *Paul* assures us, that he lived the Life which he lived in the *Flesh*, by the Faith of the Son of God, *Gal.* 2. 20. that even his natural Life, and the Affairs of it, were influenced and order'd by the Divine Life, which Christ, the Object of his Faith, by his Divine Spirit, lived in him; *For I live* (saith he) *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*

I have thus endeavour'd to shew you the two first Things I propos'd ; I now proceed to lay before you, but very briefly, the Scripture or *Gospel-means* for the attaining this Perfection ; or for making the Man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good Works.

And (1.) it is plain from Scripture, that the foremention'd Dispositions are wrought in the Soul only by a large Measure of the *Spirit*. And by the *Spirit*, I mean a Divine Spiritual Principle wrought in us by God's Spirit (for what is born of the Spirit, *is Spirit*) which, as by a Kind of holy *Spiration*, or Breathing upon our Souls, actuates and enlivens them ; imparting holy *Light*, or Knowledge to our Understandings ; *Love* to our Wills and Affections ; and *Life*, or holy Activity, to the practical Powers of the Soul, and all our Faculties ; the Image of God upon the Soul, who is *Life*, *Light*, and *Love*.

(2.) It is plain, that the Spirit is not *immediately* convey'd unto us from God the pure Deity ; but from the *Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*, (Philip. 1. 19.) God-Man, or God as Incarnate, our Head in Glory, whose Gift the Spirit is, and from whom it is to be expected, upon Prayer *in his Name*, and *Faith*, and Trust in him ; Ye believe in God, *believe also in me*, saith our Saviour, *John* 14. 1. shewing us the adequate Object of our Faith.

(3.) It is plain, that as we can do nothing without Christ, and a Supply of his Spirit ;

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so that we can never arrive unto Christian Compleatness or Perfection, without a *plentiful* Supply of it; which is call'd in Scripture *a Fulness of God and Christ, and of his Spirit in us.* Whereupon the Apostle prays (*Eph. 5. 18. 3. 19.*) that the *Ephesians might be filled with all the Fulness of God*; and exhorts them to be *filled* with the Spirit; that is, to use all Means to attain to plentiful, powerful, and effectual Measures of it.

(4.) It is very evident from Scripture, that in order to the attaining this Measure of the Spirit, we are obliged to make use of *all* God's appointed Means of Grace, it being not to be ordinarily expected but in the joynt, concurrent use of them, none being to be neglected. The Word, Prayer, Sacraments, holy Abstinence, and Humiliations; the Guidance of the Ministry; Holy, Tender, Charitable Church-Discipline; Frequenting the publick Assemblies of God's Church, whereby a holy Warmth is mutually bred, nourish'd and encreas'd; Private Converse with Men eminent for Piety and Holiness, part of the Communion of Saints we profess in our Creed, who have a more than ordinary Union and Communion with each other, by the bond of the common Measure of the Spirit they partake of; carefully attending to and recording in our Memories, God's good Providences over us; returning Thanks for his Mercies, and for his Corrections; and living a l-

always in holy Awe and Reverence as in his Sight, as if we saw him, and as those who believe that he continually sees us.

The Particulars croud fast in upon my Thoughts, and are so many, that I shall pass them by, and only just mention those which are the more immediate Instruments and Dispositions to this End; and may, I think, be properly enough call'd, in the Phrase of a great Man, *Via compendii ad Deum*, a more Compendious Way to Union with God and Christ, and Communications from his good Spirit.

And these are, I conceive,

1. *Mental and Vocal Prayer*; speaking sometimes in the *Heart*, as well as at other times with the *Voice*; and *pouring forth the Soul before the Lord*, by inward Acts of Understanding, Will and Affections, (1 Sam. 1. 12, &c. Nehem. 2. 4. Rom. 8. 26, 27.) and by groanings which cannot be uttered.

2. *Holy Meditation*, which is excellently handled by Bishop *Hall*, in a Discourse concerning that Subject; who had great Experience in it. For I shall not mention the Affecticks, and mystical Divines, because their Writings are generally obscure, and their Rules hazardous in the Practice; only I cannot but recommend the frequent perusal of the *Imitation of Christ* by *Thomas a Kempis*, because it is an admirable Book, and is the freest of all from the Errors and Superstitions of the Church he lived in.

By

By which two Instruments of Grace, a more immediate sacred Intercourse, or Communion with God, is transacted and maintain'd in the Soul, by more immediate Acts of the Understanding and Will, gradually perfected by Communications from God; according to that excellent Saying, *Non tam discendo, quam patiando Divina, Mens per ficitur Humana.* The Mind of Man is made perfect, not so much by Learning Divine Things, as by Suffering them to do their Work in Man.

But 3. The more *immediate practical* Disposition of Soul for the receiving this Measure of the Spirit, is what our Saviour calls *Poverty of Spirit*; as it comprehends the greatest Self-Denial, Humility, and the Abasement of our selves before God, as Creatures, and as Sinners; and the emptying of our selves of all which is our own; all which is Sinful, and not according to God's revealed Will; that so we may be filled with God's Spirit; from which we are hindred by our own false Prepossessions in our Understandings, and the Selfishness of our Wills and Affections. *Intus existens prohibet alienum*; our own Fulness hinders us from being filled; and yet our own Fulness is indeed but an Emptiness; a being void of the true Substantial Good; of God the Supreme Good; the only thing which can fill, and satisfy an Immortal Soul. *Deus solum Peccatorem inanem relinquit*; only the Sinner is left empty by

by God, and yet how proud is the empty Bubble; how full of himself; and how hard a Task is it to perswade others, and even our own Souls, that we must be *poor in Spirit*, before we can have any true Fortitude, any true Riches, Honour, or Pleasure. And how would the World disdain, and even scoff at the Proposal of such an Education as was to begin with Poverty of Spirit, a Term of common Reproach. And yet this Grace is placed first amongst the Beatitudes in our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount; and is the first Lesson he taught his Disciples; as the very Root and Foundation of all the other; and he rejoiced in Spirit, and gave solemn Thanks to his Father, for ordering his Doctrine after such a Manner, that it should be hid from the Wise and Prudent, and revealed only unto *Babes*; Souls conscious of their own Ignorance, and lost Estate, and of their own utter Insufficiency of themselves, that they might be replenished by God.

But how streight is the Gate, and how narrow is the Way that leadeth to this Life; and how few are there that find it, in any Degrees of Perfection; and how difficult a thing it is to fix the flitting, vain Mind, to commune with our own Hearts, and *be Still*; to empty the Soul of its own vain Thoughts and Desires; and to purify and cleanse that *Heavenly Chrystal*, that it may

may receive the Rayes of the Divine Light, and become the *Vital Image* of him who enlightens it.

Quis tenebit Cor Vanum, & figet, ut Paululum stet, & Paululum rapiat Splendorem semper stantis Æternitatis? saith St. *Austin.* Confess. 11. 10.

But what is impossible with Men, is not so with God, for with God all Things are possible; he can by his bare Word spoken turn our Wills, and give a contrary Course to all our Affections and Actions; he can draw up our Souls unto himself, and fix them upon their proper beloved Object; he can reduce them to their Primitive State, and make them living, active, bright shining Images of his Love and Goodness: And he will do so to all of us, and especially to us of the *Clergy*, whom he design'd as *Lights* to others, if we are not wanting to our selves; but according to our Duty, labour fervently at the Throne of Grace in Prayer, that we may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good Works, and compleat in all the Will of God; and serve him so here, as that we may be Happy with him to all Eternity hereafter.



SERMON XXIX.

The ordinary Method of Spiritual
Conversion.

Preached on WHITSUNDAY.

E P H E S. IV. 30.

*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,
whereby you are sealed unto the Day of
Redemption.*



THE Subject of our Meditations this Day, is the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, after an extraordinary Manner; and the Promise which Christ hath made to his Church, of sending the Holy Ghost, to prevent, assist, enlighten, strengthen, confirm, and perfect all faithful Christians. I shall not insist upon the *extraordinary* Gifts of the Spirit at this Time, but confine my self wholly to the Consideration of those Operations of the Spirit upon the Soul, and those Graces, the Effects of them, which may be *ordinarily* expected in the due Use of the Means

Means of Grace under the Gospel, which we are here commanded not to *quench*, extinguish, and render ineffectual by neglect or wilful Sin. And this I shall endeavour to perform, by shewing the Progress by which a faithful Soul is usually conducted by the Spirit in the Way to Heaven; and shall choose to do it, by laying before you the Method it frequently takes with an awaken'd Sinner, who hath been recover'd from a State of Security, wilful Negligence, or loose Profaneness; because the Beginning and Progress of the whole Change and Conversion is in such Cases more sensible than in others. And under each Head, as I go along, I shall endeavour to shew, how the Motions of the Spirit may be so maintain'd and cherish'd in the Soul, as that it may be neither *grieved* nor *quenched* by us.

(1.) The Spirit first works in the Soul of a Sinner a *Sense of Sin*, a Conviction of the Danger and Odiousness of it in the Sight of God; and then proceeds to the bringing of it to a hearty Sorrow for it, and sincere and earnest Resolutions of Amendment.

Which first Motion, or Step to Conversion, is accompanied usually with anxious Thoughts and fears of God's Displeasure and Wrath, and all the Consequences of it; and with Penitential Humiliations for Sin; and disquieting Thoughts concerning the Way and Means to be deliver'd from the Guilt, Power, and
Eternal

Eternal Punishment of it. Thus the Converts (*Acts* 2. 37.) upon St. *Peter's* Sermon were *pricked in their Heart*, and said unto *Peter*, and to the rest of the Apostles, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* And thus the Jailor sp. ung in, and came *trembling*, and fell down before *Paul* and *Silas*, and said, *What must I do to be saved?* Thus the Penitent *Corinthian* was almost *swallowed up* with overmuch Sorrow; and *Peter* went out and *wept bitterly*.

And this Effect is brought to pass by various Means, outward and inward: Such as are, 1. Publick Judgments, by which God reveals his Wrath from Heaven against the Ungodliness of Men, in Plagues, Wars, Fires, Famine, or Earthquakes. As *Pharaoh* was wrought upon by the Terror of the mighty Thundrings and Hail, to pray that God might be entreated for him. Such are also sudden great Dangers, and Escapes out of them, by which means some of those who have seen the Wonders of the Lord in the Deep, have for some time, with *Jonah's* Mariners, *feared the Lord exceedingly*, and offer'd *Sacrifice* of Thanksgiving unto him, and have made and perform'd *holy Vows*. Such are also frequently Want, and extreme Misery through Prodigality, Personal or Family Afflictions, long and sharp Sickneses, and the good Examples and Admonitions of others. But most commonly this Conviction attends the

Reading and Preaching of God's Word, which is still his Power unto Salvation to all that will sincerely entertain it. And not only by outward Means, but by immediate Operations and Impressions, and those very sensible, strong, and lively, have the Convictions of some Men been wrought in them. Of all which St. *Austin* is a most remarkable Instance, who in his *Confessions* (a Book, I think, translated into *English*, and worthy your Perusal) hath recorded the many Warnings he had from God by his own Sickness; the Death of his Companions in Sin; the overruling Providences of God; the inward Motions and Convictions of his own Conscience; and at last by a *Voice* from Heaven, commanding him to take up the Bible and read; which he open'd at that known Place of Scripture, *Rom. 13. 13, 14. Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, not in Chambering and Wantonness, not in Strife and Envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof.* A Text which all penitent Sinners ought duly to reflect upon; as they ought also duly to call to their remembrance, and meditate upon, and acknowledge the several *Providential* Warnings they have met with.

(2.) When the Penitent is wrought upon by this Conviction, and has fixt his Resolutions of Amendment, he is next brought to consider

consider of the *Remedy* by which he must be deliver'd from the miserable State he is involved in. Which upon Consideration he finds can be nothing less than that which the Gospel proposes; a crucified Saviour God-Man; no other Attonement than such a Sacrifice, being able to reconcile a miserable Sinner to God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. For if he be a tender Penitent, he will be vile in his own Eyes, and the Sins of his Youth, and of all his former Years, will be set in array before him, with all their aggravating Circumstances; and as he arrives to greater Knowledge of Scripture-Truths, so will his Convictions of his Vileness by Nature, and by Sin, increase in him; and he will be thoroughly convinced of the Necessity of a Mediator betwixt sinful Dust and Ashes and the great God, who is Holiness and Purity itself; and to Sinners a consuming Fire. And therefore Christ by his Gospel and Spirit stirs up the humble and doubtful Soul, to lay hold on the Horns of the Altar; to fly to God as a reconciled Father in and through Christ. Thus *Job*, when he was made to possess his former Iniquity, was comforted by nothing but what the *Spirit* suggested unto him, the Thoughts of his *Redeemer*. And that great Penitent St. *Austin* found not a perfect Consolation, but in the Grace of God through Christ, and the putting on the Lord Jesus.

(3.) This perswasive *Drawing* of the Soul, and this Faith in the Mercy of God through

Christ, is therefore also the more necessary to a newly converted Penitent, coming to the Father by Christ, because he must expect, upon his first Resolutions of living a more strict Life, according to Christ's Laws, to be assaulted with more than ordinary Temptations, for his Trial and Exercise, and that he may be purify'd, confirm'd, and strengthen'd by them. Thus Christ, whose Life is the perfect Pattern of what a true Christian must expect to meet with, immediately upon his Baptism (which is a conscientious Resolution and Consent to the Practice of a holy Life) was led up of the Spirit into the Wilderness, to be tempted of the Devil: And St. *Austin* doth after a most excellent manner set forth the various Agitations and Conflicts he felt in his Mind upon his Resolutions of Conversion. And in this critical Point of turning from Sin to Holiness, and from the World and the Flesh to God, the Soul will meet with Difficulties and Impediments from its own treacherous Heart; the relish which former Pleasures had left in it; the Persuasions of its old Companions in Vice; its deeply rooted Habits of Sin; the evil Customs of the Men of the World; their Scoffs and Affronts; fear of being accounted Singular, and the Effects of it, as to worldly Concerns; and from the many Objections which will be rais'd in it against Christianity and a holy Life, by *Sense*, and even *Reason* it self, whilst it is as yet

yet not duly instructed and sanctified. All which will be manag'd with great Dexterity by the Tempter, who will endeavour to overwhelm the Soul, and bring it either to despair of Pardon, or to the contrary extreme of a bold Presumption, and a careless Negligence. Be watchful therefore, O Penitent Soul, Pray earnestly, in belief of the Mercy of God in Christ; and stir up all thy Powers and Faculties to a manful Resistance; for thou knowest not the Power of a strong Resolution, when it is under the Conduct of God's good Spirit: For the weakest Desires and Inclinations to Good, are from God's Grace within thee; they are Calls from Heaven by the soft Voice of the Spirit; they are small sparks of Grace, which, if not quench'd, will break forth in God's good time into a holy Flame; and if bare *Desires* are so, much more *strong Resolutions*. Only be sure not to delay the bringing thy Resolutions into Effect by actual Endeavours, and holy Practice, according to the Light and Strength thou dost already enjoy.

(4.) When the Soul is brought to a firm Resolution, and hath, through the Assistance of God's Spirit, conquer'd this first Difficulty; then it will be drawn to a diligent Search into its *Duty*, which it hath thus resolv'd thro' God's Grace to perform. It will be engaged in the Study of the Scriptures, and other good Books, and in attending upon the Publick Teaching of God's Word. Which we are to

set about with great Care and Caution, humbly beseeching God, that he would so direct us by his Spirit, that we may not be bare Opinionists, resting in meer Notions without Practice; and that he would keep us from Error, false Doctrine, Heresy, and Schism; and not permit us factiously to adhere to any Party of Christians, to the Contempt of others, and the Prejudice of true Holiness, Charity, and the common Christianity. For these are dangerous Rocks, upon which well-minded Men often split, and make Shipwreck of Faith, and a good Conscience, through immoderate Opposition, a Zeal without Knowledge; an over-hasty engaging in Parties and Controversies; and the itch of Curiosity. Do thou therefore, sincere Soul, avoid those Extreames, and begin with the *Study* and *Practice of Duty*, and from thence proceed by Degrees, from catechetical Instructions and common Knowledge, more fully to search into the Articles and Mysteries of Religion, out of authorized Books, which practically teach the common Principles of Christianity; but by their help go on through God's Grace to advance from one Degree of Knowledge to another; still reducing all to *holy Practice*, and not overmuch troubling thy self with what does not conduce to it.

(5.) When the Soul hath gain'd competent Degrees of Knowledge, and hath gone on for some time in the ways of Virtue and Holiness,

ness, it will be drawn and come more and more to see and experience its own Backwardness, and Sluggishness in Duty; its great Ignorance, and many Weaknesses and Imperfections: And then it will be very busy in searching after *Marks of Sincerity*, whereby it may attain a well-grounded Hope, that it is in God's Favour, and in the Way to Happiness. Now these Marks of Sincerity, as they are commonly given by Divines, are indeed of great use to comfort the Soul, and to stir it up, to go on with cheerfulness in its Pilgrimage to Heaven; yet it is dangerous to rest herein; because that although Sincerity will secure our Salvation, yet no Man can be assured that he hath such Sincerity; except he desire and endeavour after the utmost Degrees of Holiness. And therefore go on, O *sincere* Soul, and search into every Corner of thy Heart, examine thy most secret Thoughts and Intentions, impartially and severely, according to God's Word; and bring forth every Sin, devote it as an accursed Thing, and resolve to slay it before God. And endeavour earnestly to *work out* thy Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and to make thy Calling and Election *sure*; remembering that for want of this, many that seek to enter in at the *straight Gate* shall not be able. Digest all the Knowledge thou hast, and employ all the Vertues thou hast already attain'd, in the further improvement of thy Graces; and bear in thy

Mind this great, and weighty Truth; That no Man can have a *well-grounded Hope*, or rational Assurance of Heaven, who has not all Christian Graces in some Measure; and is not in a State of endeavouring after a Conformity to Christ, in dying daily to Sin, and living unto Righteousness, in divesting himself of all immoderate Love and Affection to the Things of this World; to any thing, even Life it self, as it stands in Competition with God, and is not subordinate to him and his Service; who is not in a State of striving after the utmost Resignation of his own Will to God's Will, desiring and labouring to say from the very Ground and Bottom of his Heart; *Not my Will, but thine be done*; Thy Will be done by me, in a ready entire Obedience to thy Commands; Thy Will be done in and upon me, now, and to all Eternity, according to the good Pleasure of thy Goodness, which is the highest Act of Christian Perfection, upon which (according to the Experience of eminent Saints) many, and those extraordinary Comforts and Visitations have ensued, which they *could not*, or if they could, *durst not* utter. Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, let us give all Diligence to add to our Faith, these, and all other Vertues, that so Entrance may be ministred unto us abundantly into the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, to all Eternity.



SERMON XXX.

The Operations of the Trinity on the
Soul.

I C O R. XII. 6.

*And there are Diversities of Operations, but
it is the same God which worketh all in
All.*

Compared with J O H N VI. 44.

*No Man can come to me, except the Father
which hath sent me draw him.*

And J O H N XIV. 6.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, and the
Truth, and the Life; no Man cometh un-
to the Father but by me.*



FROM this and the foregoing
Words it is evident, that there
is a great Diversity of Abilities,
and Operations in the Church;
some of which are more emi-
nently ascribed to one Person of the Holy
Trinity,

Trinity, than to another. Diversities of Gifts belonging more peculiarly to the Holy Ghost; Differences of Administration of Offices to the Lord Christ; Diversities of Operations to God the Father, the first Person in the Blessed Trinity. Now the Doctrine of the Trinity being mostly, if not always proposed to us in Scripture as it is related *to us*, and as practically operative upon *our Souls*, it is this Knowledge of it, that we must chiefly labour after, and which all of us must in some Measure necessarily obtain, that so we may experimentally know, receive, and enjoy with Peace and Comfort the *distinct* Operations and Influences of each Person upon our Souls; the Love of God the Father shed abroad upon our Hearts; the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, our Redeemer; and the Communications of the Holy Ghost, bestowing upon us all those glorious Privileges, and inestimable Benefits, which the Father out of his infinite Love hath ordain'd, and the Son out of his free Grace and Favour hath purchased for us. It is *this practical Knowledge* which we are chiefly concern'd in; without which all the speculative Knowledge of this great Mystery will avail little to our Salvation. [*Quid juvat alta de Trinitate disputare cum careas Humilitate, unde Trinitati displiceas?*] What will it profit thee to search into all the Depths of this great and unfathomable Mystery, if thou wantest the Love of God, the Grace of Christ, and the Com-

Communications of the blessed Spirit, working Humility, and all other Graces in thy Soul?

I shall not discourse unto you concerning the many and diverse Operations of the Holy Trinity, ordinary, and extraordinary; but shall confine my self to those which belong to the Conversion of a Sinner; in which great Work there are Differences also of Operations. For as at Baptism the faithful Soul dedicates, and gives it self up to the Blessed Trinity, according to their personal Relations; to the Father, as its Creator; to the Son, as its Redeemer; and to the Holy Ghost, as its Guide, and Sanctifier: So also the penitent Soul, in the work of its Conversion, is to give it self up to God the Father, that it may be drawn to Christ; and then is to give it self up to Christ, that it may by his Merits, and the Operations of the Divine Spirit from him, be brought again to God the Father, to be happy with him in his Kingdom of Eternity, where God shall be All in All.

(1.) The Father electeth some Souls (^a;) (*Rom.* 8. *Ephes.* 1. 6.) or chooseth them to Life.

(2.) The Father draws the Soul to Christ, unto whom no Man can come, except the Father draw him: (*John* 6. 44.) Man by Sin is not only at a great Distance from his true End, the Enjoyment of God in Eternal Hap-

^a Clerk in *Joan.* 6. 37, 17. 6. 10, 29.

piness ; but also from the Way to obtain it, Christ, and his Doctrine ; who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God the Father seeing Man at such a vast Distance from Everlasting Rest with himself, and from the true Way to it ; and finding him posting with a rash, inconsiderate Precipitation, towards his Eternal Ruin, out of his infinite Love and Mercy towards Mankind, first stops him in his fatal Career, and that most usually by some Sicknefs or Calamity, or some other Providential Dispensation, whereby Time and Opportunity is given him for due Consideration. Thus the prodigal Son, who had departed from his Father, and had taken a Journey into a far Country (whereby our departure from God the Father by Sin, and the vast Distance there is betwixt Heaven and Sinners, is set out unto us) came to himself (as the Scripture very significantly speaks, *Luke* 15. 17.) that is, came to exercise his Reason, and his Understanding, which departed from him when he departed from his Father ; and was brought to sober, humane, manlike Considerations, by the Extremity of Want he was reduc'd unto. And in this State, serious Consideration is our Duty, and much depends upon *us* ; that we be not negligent, nor wilfully run into our former Sins, and misuse the Freedom we have to Sin.

Secondly, When the Sinner is thus stopt in his desperate Course, in the broad Road to Destruction, he is next to be brought into the
right

right Way to Eternal Happiness. To which End the Soul, which is at a stand, and is not able to move one Step towards Heaven of it self, must have a Motion imparted unto it by God the supream Mover; or else it would for ever remain in the broad Way to Destruction, and make no manner of Progress out of it, towards the true Way to Heaven. For without God we can do nothing, and we are not sufficient of our selves to do any thing as of our selves; but our sufficiency is of God. For to all good Actions an Influence from God is absolutely necessary, without which we could no more move to Christ, or Heaven, the End, and Way to our Rest, than the Wheels of any Instrument can move without the Spring, or that which is the first original Cause of their Motion. And accordingly God the Father puts the Soul into new Motion. First calls it by the external Call of the Gospel, and then draws it by strong Motions of his Grace, proceeding from a Principle of Spiritual Life, imparted unto it. It hath a proper Freedom to Sin; it is not necessitated to it, but wilfully commits it, and may avoid it, and abstain from it, by Virtue of that common Grace, which God will deny to none under the Gospel. It hath Freedom to Good, with and under God's Grace and Spirit, which it may grieve, and quench, by neglect and wilful Sin: God drawing not Men as a Lifeless thing, but first enduing him with Spiritual Life, that he may
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be drawn with the Cords of a Man; such as are fitted to a Rational, and in some sense a Self-moving, Self-determining Creature; such a one as draws whilst it is drawn; acts whilst God works; co-operates with, but under, and in subordination to God's Grace. Even as a Wheel which of it self cannot move, yet being moved of another, doth move; whose Motion, though but one, is said to be the Motion of the Mover, and of the Thing moved. For there is a Vital Principle, or a Seed of Spiritual Life, which is as a Habit, or Principle of all Grace to the Soul, which God first imparts to those whom he calleth after an effectual Manner: Which we are not to look upon as our own, but as God's Gift; nor as sufficient of it self to work the Work of Grace in us, without continual Supplies from God's Spirit. For we are not wholly to depend upon that Stock of habitual Grace we have, but we are to pray for, expect, and depend upon God, for continual Influences and Assistances, and pray for it as for our daily Bread, to be supplied Day by Day, out of the inexhaustible Treasure of his Bounty; without which the Fountain of Grace in our Hearts will be dry'd up, as Springs are for want of Rain in the Time of Drought. Which God hath ordain'd, that we might live in a continual dependance on him; and the contrary is the Sin, our first Parents were guilty of; and the Prodigal Son (the Type of Man's Apostacy) who
would

would have the Portion of Goods which fell to him in his own Possession; and both of them desiring to have all their Knowledge, and the Means of their Preservation within themselves, in their own Possession, and not in due continual Dependance upon God.

This then is the first Work upon the Soul of a Sinner, eminently attributed to the Father in Scripture; who draws the Soul to Christ, by working strong Convictions of the Evil of Sin, and its miserable Condition by reason of it; and the Necessity there is of a Christ, a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Mediator betwixt God and Man, who must himself be God-Man; in order to his Deliverance from the Guilt, the Power, the Curse of Sin, which terrifies his guilty Conscience; and from the Justice of God the Father, the Creator, the Governor, and the Judge of all Men, whose Laws he had contemned, and whose Wrath and Justice he was subject to.

Upon these Convictions the Soul thus drawn comes to Christ, that is, the Understanding and Affections, the commanding Powers of the Soul, are prevail'd upon to believe in him, as the only Way to be effectually brought from Sin to God. I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, (saith our Saviour, *John* 14. 6.) No Man cometh unto the Father but by me.

First, No Man can come unto Christ, as the way to God, our Eternal Happiness, and our ultimate End, that which is first and chief in our Intention, the chief Scope and Design
of

of our Lives, but by Preparations, Motions and Influences from the Father, powerfully inclining and working upon the Will ^a.

And again, No Man can come unto the Father but by Christ, that is, no Man can truly take him to be his God, and love and obey him as God, and be eternally Happy with him, who comes not unto Christ to be his Disciple, to learn his Doctrine, to obey his Laws, to believe and trust in his Merits and Satisfaction for Eternal Life.

(Lastly) When the Soul is come to Christ, and hath by Faith accepted of him, to be its Prophet, or Teacher; its Priest, or Redeemer; and its King and Governor; then Christ accepts of the Soul, and imparts unto it the Holy Spirit, to renew it, confirm, and perfect it, by Communicating unto it the Effects of the Grace of Christ, and of the Love of God the Father; by which it has a Communion with the whole Blessed Trinity, by Communications of Life, Light, and Love from them; and by accepted Returns, in Obedience to them, of the Life, Light, and Love they had given it. And what can'st thou expect more, O Happy Soul? But yet to see the inexhaustible Grace and Love of God; something more and higher is prepared for thee: For at the last Day Christ shall present thee pure and unspotted unto his Father, array'd in the fine white Linen

^a *Poli Syn. Lat. & Angl. in Joan. 6. 37, 44.*

of his own Righteousness, to be perfectly and eternally united unto God by perfect Communications from his glorious Presence.

Hast thou then, O penitent Soul, experienc'd in thy self powerful Convictions of the infinite Evils of Sin, and the unspeakable Misery it hath, and will subject thee unto; and have these Convictions made thee fly to Christ for Redemption, and delivery from Hell and Sin? why then thou may'st be assur'd, that thou art drawn by God the Father to Christ; and when thou practically acceptest of him, that is, has thy Soul been made conformable to his Laws, then thou art come unto him by Faith working by Love, and hast been a Partaker of the Divine Spirit from him. And if thou dost not grieve this Spirit by wilful Sin, then thou may'st be certain that thou art under its efficacious Influences; by which thou wilt be brought again to God.

Only be sure not to grieve the Blessed Spirit by Sin; but carefully watch each the least Spark of Grace in thy Soul; diligently attend it, and improve it by Prayer, Meditation, and holy Endeavours, that so it be not quench'd by thy Neglect; but that thou may'st be safely conducted through Faith and Love by God the Father to Christ, and by Christ to the Father, to be eternally Happy with him in his Kingdom.

After this Conviction of the evil Nature, and evil Effects of Sin, the Sinner is next (according to the usual Method of the Spirit) to be convinc'd of the Necessity of a Mediator, by whom he may be reconcil'd, and brought to God, the chief Good, from whom he had departed by Sin: And the Nature of the Offices of Christ, what He hath done, and will further do for a Sinner in order to his recovery, and return to his Father, are to be plainly deliver'd, and he is to be convinc'd by very plain, but solid Arguments, of the sufficiency of Christ's Undertaking for Sinners, and of the Reasonableness and Excellency of the whole Mysterious Transaction betwixt God and Christ, for the Recovery and Salvation of lost Souls.

When the Nature of this Covenant betwixt God and Christ is open'd unto him, then he is next to be instructed in the Nature of the Promises made, and Conditions proposed by the Father and the Son to lost Mankind; and of the Consent which he gave (by his Proxies when he was baptiz'd) to that conditional Promise, whereby it became an actual mutual Covenant betwixt God and him; and his many Breaches of that Covenant, together with their Aggravation of Perjury and Contempt, are to be laid before him; and he is to be shewn how difficult it is to break off settled Habits of Sin, and that they must sorrow much who have
sin-

finned much. But yet at the same time he is to be comforted with the Promises of Strength and Assistance from a merciful Redeemer, to support him under the Difficulties of Repentance and Conversion, the Nature of which is next to be laid before him. Of which weighty Subject I can now speak but very briefly, reserving the fuller Discussion of it to the next Opportunity God shall be pleased to afford us.

He is therefore accordingly to be instructed, that if he intends to be eternally Happy, he must have his Heart turn'd from Sin to God and Christ; to God, as his only Happiness and ultimate End; and to Christ, as the only Way to God, his End: Which is call'd in Scripture, Repentance towards God, by returning to him from Sin; and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. Which Faith consists in the assenting to the Truth of what Christ hath revealed; in a consenting to the Goodness of it, and in a Delivery up of the Soul to Christ, in a full Trust upon him for Grace to perform Duty, for remission of Sins, and the Reward he hath promised; all which is comprehended in the Nature of saving Faith; and the Actions flowing from such a Faith acting by Love, are True *Christian* Obedience.

When the Soul is convinced of all this, it is next actually to practise it; and is to give up it self in an unfeigned consent to God

and Christ, and with sincere Resolutions of doing its utmost Endeavours to persevere in Obedience to their Commands; the actual Performance of which is to be the Business of the whole Life of a Sinner thus converted or turn'd to God by Resolution, and renewal of Covenant-Consent.

Upon this consent, or acceptance of Christ, to which the Soul is drawn by God the Father, through the Convictions of the Spirit, Christ accepts of the Soul, and gives it of his Spirit, the Band of Union with him, and Communications from him, in the Power of which (if it doth not resist and grieve it by Sin, but co-operates with, although under it) it is brought by Degrees to a more perfect Conformity to Christ in his sufferings and Death, by dying *daily* to sin, to the *least* Imperfection, or contrariety to God's perfect Law, and Christ's perfect Righteousness: And by that Death, when it is more than ordinarily perfect, it is brought to a mighty Experience of the Power of his Resurrection to newness of Life. The outward Man of Sin is daily to decay, and daily to be mortified, as to the least Infirmary; and the inward Man of Holiness and Righteousness is also to be renew'd Day by Day; for the more we die to Sin, the more shall we rise again to Righteousness; and although absolute Perfection is not to be attain'd in this Life, yet it is a Duty absolutely necessary
to

to *endeavour* after it, to follow after Holiness, and to press toward the Mark for the Prize of the High Calling, if by any Means we may attain to the Resurrection of the Dead.

By Death, and Resurrection, and Conformity to Christ, the Sinner becomes a new Man; he who was dead in Sin now lives; or rather, Christ liveth in him, a spiritual Christ, consisting of new Dispositions and Tempers of Mind, conformable to those of Christ, and wrought in him by his Spirit, which shew themselves in eminent Graces, and often in extraordinary Gifts, wonderful Comforts, and Joy in the Holy Ghost; the Effects of the Life and Kingdom of God in the Soul, which those only know who have experienced them; and those who have experienced them, profess themselves unable to utter. *Frequens Christi Visitatio cum Homine interno, dulcis Sermocinatio, grata Consolatio, multa Pax, Familiaritas stupenda nimis*, saith devout *Thomas à Kempis*; who had experienc'd after an extraordinary manner the Visitations of God's Spirit, and what he calls the great, holy, and divine Art of conversing internally with God and Christ; to be attain'd, but not without extream Difficulty, by abstaining from all Appearance of Evil, and endeavouring to lead a holy Life according to the Talents God hath afforded us; by Self-denial, Self-resignation of our

whole selves, and all our Concerns, to the Will of God; constant fervent Prayer for God's Spirit; attending to the Answers God makes to our Prayers; and frequently endeavouring after Prayer to God, to compose our whole Soul, or to bring it into a State of holy Silence before God, expecting to hear what God will say unto us, what holy Truth he will bring to our Minds, and fix upon them. For God speaks once, yea, twice, but Man perceiveth it not; and Christ by his Spirit standeth at the Door of our Souls and knocketh, until his Head is filled with Dew, and his Locks with the Drops of the Night.

I have thus, my beloved Brethren, endeavour'd to give you a short Description of the Method by which a Sinner is brought to God: The Father by the Spirit draws the Soul to Christ; Christ upon its consent, unites the Soul unto himself; and by the sanctifying and renewing Graces of his Spirit purges and purifies it, and brings it back again to God, array'd in its original Innocency, and his own perfect Righteousness, to be united to him to all Eternity, in the perfect glorious Enjoyment of him, who is the supream Good.

S E R-



SERMON XXXI.

Of the Being of a God.

HEB. XI. 6.

For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

IT becomes the *Ministers* of God, whom he hath made *Stewards* over his *Houſhold*, to be *Wiſe* as well as *Faithful*; and not only to diſtribute to thoſe whom they are ſet over, all which is due unto them; but alſo to *give them Meat in due Season*; that is, to diſpence God's Truths at their fitteſt *Seasons*.

Now this being an Age, wherein Atheiſm and Infidelity are ſo mightily encreaſed, as to ſpread their Infection amongſt the young-eſt Sort, and even the lower Ranks and Degrees of the People, it is the Duty of a *faithful Miniſter*, to build up thoſe who are committed to his Charge in the contrary Truths, and to prove unto them, by plain and undeniable Arguments, the Being of a God, of a Providence, and a Life to come; and the *Divine Original*

and *Authority, Reasonableness, and Excellency* of the *Christian Religion*.

Which are noble Arguments, and of the greatest Necessity and Influence upon an holy Life.

I shall therefore, through God's Assistance, endeavour in some following Discourses these three Things.

(1.) That there is a God, and a *Life to come*; which Truths mutually prove, and illustrate each other.

(2.) That God hath revealed his Will to Mankind, and that the *Christian Religion* is of a Divine Original.

(3.) That we ought to believe whatsoever God has plainly revealed unto us, although we cannot *fully comprehend* the *Nature, Manner, and Mode* of the Truth revealed unto us; nor answer all the Objections which are made against it: And that for this plain Reason, because our *Understandings* being *finite, and limited*, are not capable of *Comprehending* whatsoever an Infinite Understanding may reveal unto us, and require us to believe upon its own Authority, to exercise our *Humility*, and to shew us the *Narrowness* of our *Knowledge*, and the *Finiteness* of our limited Natures.

I. I am to prove that there is a God, and a Life to come. This will appear,

(1.)

(1.) From the Apprehension and Consent of Mankind, the ancient Heathens themselves confessing, that they knew no Nation, how barbarous soever, which did not believe this ^a Truth; that although they found some People without Houses, Learning, and Government, that yet they met with none who hath no God, no Temple, Prayers, and Sacrifices; and that the Buildings of a City might as well subsist without a Foundation, as a civil Society without the Belief of a God; because it wanted the *true Basis* and *Foundation* of Government, to wit, *Hopes* of Reward, and *Fears* of Punishment, from the Supreme Being in another World. Whence it was, that they thought there could be no Commonwealth consisting of all Atheists: And that there actually is none at present to be found any where in the remotest, and most barbarous Parts of the World, is, I think, generally confessed by the most knowing Travellers and Historians; for those who are thought to have no God, are also confessed to have no Government. But it is justly believed, that there is no considerable Number of People, which do not believe some God, or other; and that the contrary Report hath

^a Seneca Epist. 117. de Benefic. 4 4. Cicero de nat. Deor. & Tusculan Quæst. 1. §. 30. Plutarch. in Colol. Nulla est urbs ἀνίερος ἢ ἄθεος. Julian ad Heraclit: ἔγω διατετέμενοι τὰς ψυχὰς πρὸς αὐτὸ, ὥσπερ εἶναι πρὸς τὸ φῶς τὰ βλέποντα.

arisen from the Relator's *Ignorance* in their *Languages*, and from their not having conversed long enough with them, to be sufficiently skilled in their Opinions and Customs.

But supposing the Truth of these Relations, what will the Atheist gain from them? Seeing it is confessed by the *Relators themselves*, that there are but ^a few such, and those *extreamly barbarous*; that they are degenerated from the *Race* of *Mankind*; that they have scarcely the *Countenances* of Men, or any *remains* of a rational Being in them; and that they are had in the lowest degrees of Contempt by their Neighbours; the very Savage *Indians* (as is observed ^b) taking part against Atheists, with the most subtile Philosophers; and the Belief of a God being so natural, that a Man must forfeit his Reason, and his Rank amongst Creatures, before he can efface the Apprehension of him out of his Mind.

But it may be said, were there not Atheists amongst the Philosophers, and were they not Men of Reason and Learning; and why then do you assert, that none but those who *unman* themselves can be such?

^a *Herberts Travels* pag. 16, 17. *De la Valles Travels.*

^b *Lord Bacon. Essay* 16.

To which Objection it may be answer'd, that all were ^a *not Atheists* who were so accounted so; that all who professed themselves to be so were not really such, it being justly questionable whether a Man can wholly shake off the Apprehension of a Deity; that those who made this Profession were but few; were exploded by the *best* and *wisest* of the *Philosophers*; and when detected were punished by the Laws of their Countries.

But supposing that there have been, and are still some Atheists; yet this is no more an Exception against the *Universality* of the Truth, and the *Consent* of *Mankind* in it; than it would be against the *Rationality* of Mankind, to say, that there are some *Fools* and *Madmen*; or that there is *no Motion*; that *Snow* is not white; that a Thing can be, and not be at the same Time, because some have affirmed it to be so ^b: The *Universality* of a *Truth* being to be taken not from the *Reception* of it by every *particular Person*, but by the Generality; from its agreement to the common Rules of *right Reason*, and the *Consent* of the *most*, the *best*,

^a Thus that eminent *Philosopher* *Scorates* was reputed an Atheist, and as such condemned to die; but the Reason hereof, was not that he denied a God, but because he denied a Plurality of Gods.

^b *Aristot.* *Metaphys.* 4. 4. *Nihil tam absurdum quod non dixerit aliquis Philosophorum.* *Cic.* *de Natura Deor.* Lib. 3.

and

and *wisest* of Mankind, from whom the Voice of Nature and Reason is to be learnt; and not from *some few*, who are to be accounted of no otherwise than as *Monsters* in Nature, deviating from the Race of Mankind, and the general Reason and common Sentiments of it.

(2.) Mankind doth not only consent to this Truth, but there are also necessary Inclinations in humane Nature to it; all Men being naturally and almost invincibly inclined to the Worship of something or other. For there is scarce any, and I believe I may safely say, no Nation, how Barbarous soever, which hath not its Religious Worship; and all Men naturally, even those who profess they believe no God, do yet upon a sudden Surprise, and when in an imminent Danger, look up to Heaven, and call upon something above them for help, and cannot possibly shake off the *Convictions* of their *Consciences*, and the *Fears* of a future Punishment. The Multitude of Gods amongst the Heathens, plainly shew that they were inclined to *Religious Worship*, and that so strongly and powerfully, that they would worship any thing, even *Leeks* and *Onions*, rather than nothing at all. Nay, it is very observable (as if the Soul were not only naturally religious, but Christian ^a) that the

^a O animam naturaliter christianam! Tertull. Apolog. Cap. 17. & de Testim. Animæ c. Marcion. l. 10.

ancient Heathens, who worshipped many Gods, were yet generally wont, especially when in Danger, to call upon one only; as the *Heathen Mariners*, with whom *Jonah* failed, *Jon.* 1. when the Ship was nigh sinking, *cried every Man unto his God*, that is, the particular God whom he chiefly worshipped. The Philosopher who first ^a vainly professed to endeavour to banish the Belief of a Deity out of the World, could never root it out of his own Mind; but is observed by a Heathen ^b himself to have been the most fearful amongst all Mankind, of those Things which he professed not to fear, Death, and the Gods. It is remarked by ^c Travelers, that those *Indians*, who are thought to believe no God, do yet when it Thunders, or when any sudden Danger surprises them, look up to Heaven, for aid from some Superior Being. And the *greatest Emperors*, and most *powerful Persons*, who have been raised above the Fears of earthly Punishments, could by no means get rid of the Fears and Expectations of a Punishment from an invisible Hand above them; and those (according to the Observation of the

^a Primum Graius Homo ——— Lucret.

^b Cicero de Natura Deorum I. Cap. 86. Nec quenquam vidi qui magis ea quæ timenda esse negaret, timeret; Mortem dico, & Deos.

^c Micræl. Ethnophron. Lib. 2. p. 62, 67. Ex Lerii & Maffæi Histor. Indic.

Heathen Poet ^a) have been most obnoxious to this fear, who have professed that they had least of it.

Neither have Men only natural Fears of Punishment from a Being above them ; but also there are implanted in their Minds natural Desires to know, love, and enjoy here, and perfectly hereafter, something more perfect than any it hath met with here below, and which is capable of filling and satisfying the boundless and infinite Desires of the Soul ; which can be nothing else ^b than something Supreme, Eternal, Infinitely Good, Powerful, and Wise. For the Mind is not satisfied with Knowledge, nor our Appetites and Desires with what we enjoy ; but we naturally extend them to something beyond this World ; and are cloyed with the nauseous Repetition of the same unsatisfactory Enjoyment. The *Soul*, conscious of its Original, seems to be displaced in this World, and longs to attain its *proper Place* and *Mansion*, a Rest for it self, and a *Satisfaction* for its Desires, something *above* the petty Interests, mean Advantages and Enjoyments it hath hitherto met with.

^a Hi sunt qui trepidant, & ad omnia fulgura pallent.

^b φαυλὸν δὲ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῶον ἀίδιον, αἰετον.
Aristot. *Metaph.* 12. 7. Summum, magnum, & formâ, & ratione, & Vi, & Potestate. Tertull. c. Marcion. 1. 3.

Now to draw the Argument to a Conclusion; It is the common Consent of Mankind that there is a God, of all who exercise their Reason, and make a free and impartial Use of their Understandings, and do not permit them to be prejudiced, and prepossed by their Senses, their Imaginations, or their Passions, which are the chief Sources and Causes of Error in this and most other Matters. He who does *not exercise* his *Reason*, may indeed *sink* into Atheism; but of such no more Account is to be made, than of Children who are not come to the Use of their Reason: And he who will not hearken to the natural *Dictates* of his Understanding, but follows his *Senses* and *Imaginations*, notwithstanding the *Convictions* of his Reason; and will not believe that there is a God, because he hath never seen Him, and cannot fancy what Kind a Being he is; is highly irrational, and must upon the same Grounds disbelieve whatsoever he hath not seen; must submit to all the Follies of Imagination; must believe the *Sun* to be no bigger than it appears to his Eye and his Fancy; and must deny that Man hath any higher and nobler Faculties and Objects than those of his Senses, and his Imagination. He who follows only his *Passions*, may indeed be hurried by them into downright Atheism; but then he lays aside his Reason, and becomes a Brute.

So

So that I believe, the Observation to be true, that there is no such Thing, properly speaking, as an Atheist; that is, one who is so by virtue of Reason and Argument, and in his Understanding; but that this *Error* chiefly proceeds from the *Passions* and the *Will*; from some gross *neglect* of exercising our *Reason*, some *Indisposition* of Body or Mind, the *Predominancy* of *Sense*, and brutish Lusts; and that the Atheist only thinks, but cannot possibly be sure that there is no God; he only doubts of this Truth, but cannot be assured of the Truth of the contrary. The contemplative Atheists (saith my *Lord Bacon*) are very few, and seem to be more than they are; nay, they rather speak what they would have, than thoroughly believe it, or are perswaded of it; for very few deny there is a God, but those whose Interest it is there were none.

Now, if it be the Opinion of all Mankind that there is a God, but only of some few who have perverted their Understandings, and debased their Natures; if the generality of all Ages and Nations have consented to this Truth, notwithstanding the Prejudices of their Senses, Imaginations, Passions, and Interests to the contrary; if all good Men are naturally inclined to love, hope for, and desire such a Being; and all bad Men at some time or other to believe, fear, and tremble at a supreme Being, which
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can punish and take Vengeance of them; and if this Belief and Fear are so natural to them, that they cannot get rid of them, but that they follow, and as it were, dog and haunt them whether they will or no; will it not follow that they are natural and necessary to them; and that there must be some such Being whom Men thus naturally believe, fear, love, and desire, or else that such Apprehensions, Inclinations, and Appetites were in vain implanted in their Natures, if there were really no Object suitable for them. But if (as all Men grant) nothing be made in vain, and Mankind be not the most deluded of all Creatures, there must be something without him which he naturally knows, fears, admires, and adores; and all this is not the Creature of his own Brain; or else he will be made up of nothing but Illusion and Fancy, will worship nothing but the Idol of his own Imagination, and be more foolish and miserable than the Beasts that perish. And this is indeed a *grand Objection* against Atheism; that it *debases the Nature of Man*, makes the best of his Faculties of no use, or a very bad one; either makes him to have no Reason at all, or denies it him in Things of the greatest Moment.

If such Apprehensions and Fears were not *natural*; but were (as some have said) wrought in Mankind by degrees, by Cu-
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from and *Education*, and the Craft of politick and powerful Men, who deceived and over-awed others, why are the *greatest Princes*, and the most *crafty Politicians* subject to them? And why cannot they by a contrary Custom and Education be razed out of Mens Minds? How came they to be *general* and almost universal, common to all Times and Places, which nothing is that is not natural? How comes the Belief of a God to continue amidst the various Changes of Human Society, if it were the Invention of Governours and great Men, when Arts, Languages, and even Government it self, have in the mean while been alter'd and overthrown? If the Cheat of Religion be detected, and it is plain and evident that there is no God, no Providence, nor future Rewards and Punishments, and consequently that there ought to be no Religion in the World; why hath not this Opinion prosper'd; why hath it not been propagated amongst the Wise and the Virtuous Part of Mankind; why were no civilized Nations ever converted, or brought over to the Belief of it; and why do not Men shake off so uneasie a Companion as the Fear of a future Life, a just Being above us, and trouble of Conscience is, which is founded upon the Belief of God and another World? But alas, Men strive in vain; some *few* may for some Time *stifle*, but they cannot wholly

ly *quench* such Thoughts and Apprehensions; for Experience shews, that what is so *natural*, will some Time or other return with *greater Vigor* upon their Minds.

It is indeed said, that it is for the Interest of the *Priesthood*, and of *Governours*, that the Cheat of Religion (as the Libertines of this Age speak) is kept up, and that by them it is chiefly maintained. But alas, I fear that the *Interest* of those whose Business it is to *minister about holy Things*, is of so little Value in this Age, that unless the Doctrine they teach were highly *agreeable* to *right Reason*, and of a Supernatural and *Divine Original*, all their Skill and Art could prevail but little to keep up its Reputation in the World; and that if there were not a Providence assisting, and superintending it, the Powers of this World (notwithstanding the great Advantages Religion in general affords to the upholding of Government in it) would have eased themselves of so troublesome a Thing as Christianity is by this time; and that one which had less of Conscience, Strictness, Purity, and Holiness in it, would be found to be more acceptable to the Generality of the World.

But God hath taken greater Care to keep up Religion, and the Belief of Himself in the World; for he hath framed each Man's Soul and Conscience after such a Manner,

that his *Reason* will, if duly and freely exercis'd, lead him to the Acknowledgment of a *first Being*; and his Conscience will convince him that he owes an Account of his Actions to some Superiour Being above him. For what is *Conscience*, but the Result of a Man's Judgment upon himself and his own Actions, with reference to a future Life, and a Superiour Being, which can punish or reward him? Now, if there were actually no such Being as that which his Conscience presents unto him, but if it were the Creature only of his Fears and his Fancy, Man would be the most deluded and foolish of all Creatures, and one that troubled himself all his Life only about Nothing. But alas, (as one ^a excellently speaks) If *God* had not been *above*, there could never have been any such thing as *Fear* and *Conscience below*; nor could an universal Fear of an invisible Nothing have seized upon all rational Creatures. And although wicked *Politicians*, and those *Plagues* of the Earth, *cruel Tyrants*, may make use of these Apprehensions and Inclinations of Mankind to bad and base Ends; yet they could not possibly plant them in Men's Natures, but found them there, and then craftily made use of them. No, these great and excel-

^a Wolfey of Atheism, p. 107.

lent Truths, of the Being of a God, and a Providence, and a Life to come, and the Immortality of the Soul (that heavenly Principle of the Image of our Creator within us) are of a more noble Nature, than to owe their Original to Craft and Fraud, Power and Cruelty. They were not bred in Cities, Courts, or Camps, or propagated by force of Arms; but are the natural Result of free and impartial Reason, and are riveted in the Understandings, Inclinations, Desires, Affections, and Consciences of all Men. The Souls of bad Men cannot be rid of the Fears and Apprehensions which naturally and invincibly arise in their Minds; and all good Men desire, thirst, pant after, and are vehemently and irresistibly inclined to admire, love, adore a supreme and a perfect Being, and to be happy in another; they find *no rest* for their Souls in this, and therefore do they believe that there must be another.

And Thanks be given to our good and wise Creator, that he hath ~~formed~~ us with such *natural Apprehensions* and Inclinations; that he hath given us *erect Countenances*, which naturally look upwards, and hath framed our *rational Desires* so, as to be unsatisfied with any thing but what is Endless and Perfect.

Our displaced Souls, O Supreme Goodness, are uneasie until they come to Thee; and acknowledge no rest or satisfaction in any Thing on this side Heaven, but in what makes a Heaven upon Earth, thy Presence by Faith here, and Hopes to be Eternally Happy with Thee hereafter.



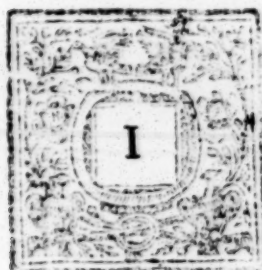


SERMON XXXII.

Of the Being of a God.

H E B. XI. 6.

For he that cometh to God, must believe that he is; and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.



Have already endeavoured from these Words to prove the Being of a God, by the plainest and most convincing Arguments I could think of, such as lie level to the Understandings of all Men; and yet carry no less Conviction and Certainty with them than those which appear more profound and subtle. For God designed that these *Truths*, upon which *Religion* depends, should be enforced with variety of Arguments, fitted to work upon the Apprehensions and Inclinations of Mankind; and that there should be some, which by their *natural Congruity* to our thinking Faculties, should carry a *powerful Evidence* with them, and

be suitable to the Understandings of the generality of Mankind. And such are those which I have already proposed unto you, taken from the *general Consent* of Mankind, upon a free and impartial Use of Reason; and the *natural Inclinations* we bear about us to *religious Worship*; the *natural Desires* we have of being happy for ever; and the *natural, and invincible Fears* of Punishments in another World from a Being above us.

Obedience to Laws and Government, and the Consciences of all Men, suppose a God, and future Rewards and Punishments, without which Government could not long subsist, if there were not a *Monitor* or *Accuser*, and a *Judge* within our own Breasts! and restraints from Sin, from *natural*, and necessary *Fears* of a God, and another Life. If God were not above, there could be no such thing as *Fear*, and *Conscience* below! nor could an *universal Fear* of an *invisible Nothing* have seized upon all *rational Creatures*. Do not our Thoughts and our Desires extend themselves naturally beyond this World; do they not expect something greater, better, and more perfect than any Thing they have yet enjoyed? And if we have *Faculties* with such Desires and Expectations implanted in them, seeing nothing is in vain, must there not be some *perfect Object* to fill and satisfy them? And where is that to be found here below? what is there

there which is not imperfect and unsatisfactory, and attended with much Vanity, Trouble, and Vexation of Spirit? Our Souls find no rest in this World, and therefore do they believe that there is another; they are displaced here, they are out of their proper Sphere and Mansion, and therefore do they desire, expect, and pant after a Rest hereafter: This World they find does not fill and satisfy them, and therefore they are verily persuaded, that they were made for more than this World, for something which is endless, perfect and true Happiness; for nothing less can fill and satisfy our boundless Appetites.

But (3.) These *great Truths* may be proved not only from the *universal Consent*, and natural Inclinations, Desires, Fears, and Consciences of Mankind, but also from many extraordinary and supernatural Effects; and from the very Wickedness which reigns in the World, a strong Argument may be taken to prove that there is a God and Goodness. For God hath taken so great Care to keep up a Sense of Himself, and of his Rewards and Punishments in another World, that he hath made the Devil and the Evil Spirits, those Enemies of Souls, give Testimony to these great Truths whether they will or no; by making them not only *believe*, although they *tremble*, but give us also Evidence of this our Belief.

For

For what are the undeniable Compacts of Witches, and other wicked and miserable Persons with Beings appearing to them in unusual Shapes, and the strange Effects that have been performed by them; what are Apparitions, unaccountable Possessions, and those violent and invincible Impulses and Temptations to horrid Sins and Self-murder, which some have felt; but as so many strong Evidences of these great Truths. For if there were no God, no Religion, nor a Life to come, why should Men be so violently tempted to the Disbelief of them? And if there be something (as we all feel and experience) that is very diligent to disturb and deceive us, and bring us to Sin and Misery; will it not follow, that there are such Things as Rest and Happiness, Truth, Virtue, and Religion? For why else should any Thing be so solicitous to effect and propagate the contrary. Error shews that there is such a Thing as *Truth*; and *Vice*, that there is *Virtue*; temptations to Evil, that there is Goodness; to Misery, that there is Happiness: Bad Spirits shew that there are good ones; and the Being of a Devil, proves that there is a God whom he opposes. It is past doubt from plain Evidence, that there have been Persons who have contracted with evil Spirits, who have appeared to them in several Shapes; and although many of the Reports which have past for current

current amongst ignorant People have been vain, groundless, and false; yet there being many plain Instances to the contrary, the few false Reports do but, as some few Exceptions, confirm the general Truth; which is sufficiently evident from the Experience of those who have lived in those Countries where the evil Spirits frequently appear, familiarly converse with them, and sometimes leave behind lamentable Proofs that they are really so, to the Terror of the Inhabitants^a. And whosoever denies the Truth of all these Reports and Relations, must call in question the Truth of all History, must arraign the Laws of most Countries, and the Magistrates of them of Injustice and Cruelty, who have frequently condemned Persons for diabolical Actions and Contracts; and an innumerable Company of Witnesses of the greatest Folly or Malice, who have asserted the Truth of such Facts.

But the strange Temptations and Suggestions which Men are subject to, and the wonderful Defeats which good and pious Designs do frequently meet with, are plain and palpable Evidences of some evil Spirit in the World, which is an inveterate Ene-

^a See the History of *Lapland*, and the Island of *Feroe*, &c. *Baxter's Saints Rest*, 232, &c.

my to the Quiet and Happiness of Souls, to God and Goodness; and that there are Souls whose Enemy he is, and a God whom he opposeth. Why should Men be tempted to murder themselves, if they had not Souls which upon this Murder come into the Power, and under the Dominion of the Tempter? Why should Apparitions be generally with reference to some Sin committed in this Life, if there were not another wherein it is punishable? And if there were not Evil Spirits, how should Men be tempted to Sins quite against their natural Temper, their Interests, their Inclinations, plain Sense and Reason; and that so violently and importunately, as if something spoke to them, and irresistibly urged them on to their own Ruin? How come evil Designs to go on smoothly and successfully, and good ones, tending to Charity, Peace, and the Conversion of Mens Souls, do meet with such unaccountable Stops and Discouragements? There must be therefore Goodness, and a good and perfect Being, the Author of it; and there must be a difference betwixt the Wicked and others hereafter; or else why do Satan's Temptations tend to the Discouragement of Virtue, and the Ruine of Souls?

From whence comes the Dishonour of God; and of Religion, to be carried on with so much diligence, craft, and violence;
and

and if there be no God, to what End is his Name blasphemed by Men of devilish Tempers? Why is he cursed by departing Wretches, Atheists, and out of the Mouth of Madmen? From whence should all this come to pass, but from evil Spirits, taking the Advantage of Men's sinful Passions, and depraved Habits of Body or Mind, to vent their Malice against God, to dishonour him, and ruine the Creatures he hath made; although God out of his Wisdom and Goodness orders these Things to quite another End, making them subservient to the Belief of Himself, and of another World; few Arguments having more Efficacy upon the generality of Mankind to the Belief of another Life, than those which arise from the undoubted Accounts of the Apparitions of good and bad Spirits, and of departed Souls; which were designed to work upon the natural Fears of Mankind, and carry a sensible and undeniable Evidence with them.

Thus does some Being above us (and the Effect argues him to be a wise and a powerful One) extract Antidotes out of the greatest Poisons; Arguments for Virtue, out of Vice; for Goodness, out of Wickedness; for his own Being, the Immortality of the Soul, and another Life, out of the Actions of those who oppose, abhor, and dishonour him, and profess that they do not believe him.

him. *O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the World! Thou hast set thy Glory indeed above the Heavens; but hast imprinted Footsteps of it upon all Things here below; yea Hell it self trembles at thy Presence; and the Devils, which cannot but believe in thee, do make known thy Being whether they will or no; and out of the very Mouths and Confessions of the most wicked Persons hast thou ordained Strength, Proof, and Conviction, because of thine Enemies.*

But (4thly.) Besides these, there are other *extraordinary Actions* and *supernatural Effects*, which argue extraordinary and supernatural *Beings* above us. Such as Prefages of Good or Evil which have happened unto us; future Events made known to us, supernatural Dreams not depending upon the Humours and Constitutions of our Bodies, or any other natural Circumstances and Accidents^a; it being observed by a *Judicious Person*^b, that there hath scarce happened any *considerable Revolution* in State, or Action in War, whereof we do not find in History some sort of *Prediction* and *Prefage* or other; or some very *remarkable Act* of an over-ruling Hand above us visible in it.

^a Barrow on the Creed, 130.

^b Barrow on the Creed.

There is most commonly something in them which does surpass the Laws of Nature, or does cross and thwart the ordinary Course of humane Affairs. When a Nation, or a Religion, is upon the Brink of Ruine, then does some invifible Power often put a Stop to it.

The *Wisdom visible* in the *Creation* of the *World*, and all Things in it, loudly proclaims this Truth. For the *Works of Creation* were produced by Divine Counsel and Wisdom.

And here, if we do but look Abroad, we cannot cast our Eyes upon any Thing which has not the Marks and Characters of the *Wisdom* and *Skill* of its Maker stamped and impressed upon it. For as the famous *Statuary* preserved his Memory by engraving his own Image upon the Shield of the Goddess; so has the great Creator made manifest *his Eternal Power and Godhead*, by imprinting the *lively Lines* and *Characters* of his own *Likeness* and *Image*, not only upon Man, but also in some Sense and Measure, upon all Things else that he hath made. If we lift up our Eyes to Heaven, we can see *nothing* there which is not the Subject of our Wonder and Admiration. For whether we consider the *Order* and *Harmony*, the *Constancy* and *Regularity* of those Heavenly Bodies, and yet their vast and almost incredible Magnitude and Number; the enlivening and invigorating Efficacy of their
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Light and Heat, or the other less known, but mighty and strange Influences which they have upon this lower World; we can find nothing which does not speak the *Power* and *Wisdom* of him that made them. For what else but Almighty Power could give them such admirable *Perfections*? and what less than infinite *Wisdom* and *Counsel* could contrive, maintain, and uphold them? What else could preserve the *unerring Return* of *Day* and *Night*, *Winter* and *Summer*; or regulate and determine, by so constant and fixed Periods, the *swift Motions* of those *vast Bodies*? Nothing certainly but *perfect Mind* and Understanding: For he that can think, that the *certain* and *determinate Revolutions* of the *Sun* and *Moon*, and all the glorious Host of Heaven, is conducted and guided by *blind Chance* or *fatal Necessity*, without a Supreme Wisdom making and superintending them, is fit to believe any thing, although never so ridiculous, and capable of knowing nothing as he ought.

But if from the Heavens (whose Nature, Effects, and Influences, are less known and obvious to us) we take a View of this *inferior World*, what is there which does not loudly proclaim infinite Wisdom to be its Author? What else could settle this dull inanimate Earth in a Place so advantageous, neither too near to the scorching
Heat

Heat of the Sun, nor too remote from its kindly Warmth and Influences? Whereas if it had been fixed in any other Point of that infinite Space that surrounds it, the whole *Globe* of the Earth (except some Alteration had been made in the Frame or Motion of the Heavens, which still must have argued Wisdom and Designs) had been uninhabitable, fruitless, and barren. And can we think that it could settle in that one Place, in which alone it could be useful, meerly by Chance, or without Contrivance and Design? And as for those Places which lie under the Line, and are more subject to the Heat of the Sun, Providence has so wisely provided for them, that by reason of cold Nights, frequent Rains, moist and cooling Winds, they prove the most pleasant and fruitful Parts of the World. For God, out of the colder Regions of the Earth, which he has wisely placed at each extremity of the World, doth produce Cold and Winds, as out of his Treasures, to abate the scorching Heat of the Sun.

Neither doth the beneficial Situation only of the Earth, but all Things which are about it, and within it, speak and declare the *Wisdom* of its Author. What could have been contrived with better Design and Art than the *fluid* Air that encompasses it? For if it had been solid, it had

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hundred the Warmth and Influence of the Heavens; if composed of Fire, or Water, it had been wholly unfit for Breathing and Respiration. But by being made neither hot nor cold, but capable of both, it is most admirably suited to the Use and Necessities of the Creature.

As for the Element of *Water*; if there had been none at all, or less than there is, the Earth had been dry and barren for want of Rain; if there had been more, it had been overflowed. For if Providence, even contrary to the Laws of Nature, had not sunk this lighter Element beneath the Earth, which is heavier, it would have been a greater Wonder that there was not always a Deluge, than that there once was.

But why do I insist upon these greater and more manifest Works of Providence; even the barren *Mountains* and craggy *Rocks* not only serve for Ornament and Variety, but skreen and shelter us from the Violence of Storms and Weather, and afford us many pleasant Streams, and useful Rivers. Nay, the rude and boisterous *Winds* fulfil the *Word of God*, they move and cleanse the Air, which otherwise would stagnate, and be subject to infection; they fill the Sails of our Ships; they gather, and then scatter and divide the Clouds, that they might drop Fatness upon the Earth.

What

What is there in the whole Frame of Nature idle and insignificant; what not of great Use, nay, of utmost Necessity? If we search into the Bottom of the Sea, or dig into the Bowels of the Earth, we shall scarcely find any Thing that doth not administer to our Use, Profit, or Plenty. Nay, Providence has not only largely provided for the Necessities, and even Pleasures of Mankind, but there is no *Fly*, or *Worm*, or even the most inconsiderable *Insect*, which has not almost its proper Food, and whose Desires are not fully satisfied.

Who can think upon these Things, and not break out with the Psalmist (147. 5.) into a holy Rapture of Praise and Admiration: *Great is our Lord, and of great Power, his Understanding is infinite; O Lord, how manifold are thy Works, in Wisdom hast thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches*, (Psal. 104. 24.)

But if from the Consideration of inanimate Creatures we proceed to animate, and then raise our Contemplation to the Chief of them, Man, the Likeness and Image of his Creator, how will our Praise and Admiration increase? For, who can sufficiently admire the *infinite Variety*, *exquisite Shape*, admirable *Curiosity*, and almost unperceivable *Subtily* of the minuter Parts and Organs of every Ant, or Fly, or meaner Insect? The Industry, and almost Prudence and Civil

Oeconomy of *Bees*, has employed no less the Consideration, than their Profit has the Care of many Persons.

And the bare Contemplation of the Parts of a *Mole*, which are so *admirably fitted* for its living under *Ground*, could not but raise the Devotion of *Cardan*, a Man otherwise not much given to it. And *Galen*, a Heathen, upon Consideration of the *Use* of the *parts*, especially of Humane Bodies, could not but break out into a Kind of *Hymn*, in *praise* of the great Creator; which is so excellent, that (as one notes) it seems to be writ with a kind of Rapture and Enthusiasm. And indeed, who could have done otherwise, who considers the wonderful Beauty, Contrivance and Use of any one single Part of Man's Body. The Frame of our *Hands* fitted for the holding of things of different Size and Quantity, by reason of their being divided into Fingers of divers *length* and make, and the other uses of its parts, has taken him up almost one whole Book; for he has spent seventeen whole Books in Consideration of these Things.

But how will our thoughts be raised and enlarged, if we proceed to the Consideration of the Soul, the chief Master-piece of the Creator. For, who can think that any thing else, but infinite Wisdom, could frame that which is endued with so much Wisdom and Knowledge? Could Matter, howsoever moulded and refined, ever advance it self
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into a Being capable of Wisdom and Virtue, of a Knowledge so large, a Memory so retentive and capacious, Desires so aspiring and lofty. Could unthinking, or unguided Principles, ever so far comprehend things present, as out of them to gather things to come, and draw out the whole Connexion and frame of Humane Wit and Policy. Who is there that considers those things, that must not be forced to cry out: *Lord, how fearfully and wonderfully am I made. What is Man that thou art thus mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou thus visitest him.*

6. The Being of a God is manifest from *natural* and *ordinary Effects* and *Causes*, as well as from *Extraordinary* and *Supernatural*; and from the *wise Ends* and *Designs*, visible in the particular Works of Nature, tending to one common, general End, the Good of the Whole. If a Man were asked, how he knows that he has a Soul, which he never saw; his chief Answer would be, by the *Effects* he perceives within himself, which could be produced by no other Being but a Spiritual, and a rational Principle within him: And so if a Man be asked, why he believes that there is a God, the plainest, first, and most natural Return that a rational Man would make, would be this; by the *Effects* he finds in the World, and the *Wisdom* visible in them; which could not be

effected but by a *powerful, wise, and understanding Being*; whom he must therefore believe to be, although he never saw him.

Skilful *Works* must needs have a *Wise Artificer*; and does not the *exquisite Skill* visible in the Works of *Nature*, above the utmost *Art*, and Contrivance of the wisest *Creature*; the *suitableness* of the several *Parts* and *Faculties* of each *Creature* to their particular *Natures, Ends, and Uses*; and the general subserviency of all the *Parts* of the whole, to one *great End*; the *preservation* of it, and the good of Mankind, sufficiently argue, that there is *one wise Being* (for if there were many, there might be Contrariety, and so this one End could not be so constantly attained) and *Supreme Cause* of all things, by whom the *Order* and *Connexion* of things upon each other was first settled, who gave them their Being and Operations for such *Ends* and *Designs*, and governs and conducts the inanimate and irrational *Parts* of them to *Ends* they have no knowledge of. The *Air* we breath in is subservient to *Man's Life*, but knows not this *End*, nor acts of it self towards it. The *Wheat* grows, and yet neither consults nor deliberates whether it should grow or no, much less designs it self for *Food* for Man; and the *Infant* in the Womb is curiously formed out of an imperfect Substance, without its own *Knowledge*, or the *Care* or *Contrivance*
of

of its *Parents*; and that after so *wonderful* a Manner, that a sagacious Naturalist of our own (not over-credulous in Matters of Religion) could not but say, that there was a *Divine Hand* in it; and that *Life* must be from the Command of an Omnipotent Being, saying, *Let there be Life, and there was Life.*

Now must there not be in all these Things some over-ruling, wise Power? For how else should Things which have *no Knowledge* attain *wise Ends*, and those which have Knowledge, *Ends* which they perceive not. The *Spider* (whatsoever Knowledge some may suppose in *sensitive Creatures*) has certainly no skill in *Geometry*, and the Rules of Proportion, and yet its *Web* is formed in a most *curious Figure*, peculiarly fitted and adapted to the *Ends* of its Nature, and to the receiving, entangling, and keeping its Prey.

If a Man newly sprung out of the Earth (according to the Supposition of our *English* Atheist) should behold from an high Eminence a great *Army* moving in Battle Array, and anon engaging another opposite to it, must he not from the Consideration of the *Order* of their Motions, and the great Variety observed in the Management of them, gather from the *one general End* he saw pursued, and attained by them, that there must be some *wise Conductor* of their

seemingly irregular Motions? Must he not think if he saw a *Ship* making its Way upon the Sea amidst *contrary Winds* and *Waves*, to a designed *Port*, that it must be under the Guidance of something endued with *Art* and *Skill*, by which it was steered in its tempestuous Course? If *Reason* be required to the Government of a City, or Kingdom, must it not be so to the *Making* and *Government* of the World, which consists of various and different Parts, contrary to, and naturally destructive of each other; for how should *Fire* and *Water* (of Natures so opposite) unite in the Composition of Things, and not destroy each other, if they were not over-ruled by some *Superior Being* into a perfect Harmony and Agreement? As a large and populous *City*, consisting of a Multitude of Persons of divers Sorts and Conditions, Sexes, Ages, and Qualities, some Poor, some Rich, some Strong, some Weak, could not possibly subsist long in Quiet without the *Wisdom* of *Laws*, and the Power and Authority of Magistrates to govern them; so neither could this great City of the World, consisting of contrary Parts, regularly pursue and attain one constant End, without the Direction and Government of a Superior Being above them.

From the Consideration of these Things did the *Heathens* arrive to the Knowledge of a God; and from the *Works* of Nature

ture and Providence, *the Things which are seen*, did they gather those *which are not seen*, Eternal Power and Godhead. We have *Countenances* to look upwards, and to take a View of all Things about us, and *Reason* to guide and direct our *Senses* to reflect and consider, and gather one Thing out of another; Causes from Effects; Things unseen, from Things seen; Spiritual, from Material; future, from past and present; what we shall be, from what we are; *a perfect, wise, and powerful Being* above us, from the *Perfections* visible in the Things here below. Let us make due Use of our Faculties, and then we shall not fail to attain the Ends to which they were given us: *For God is not far from us, we are his Offspring, and in him we live, and move, and have our Being*; every *Herb* and *Spire of Grass* shews that there is a God, and the *Speech and Language* of the *Heavens*, and of all the *Works and Parts* of *Nature* is gone out into all the *Earth*; and to the *Ends of the World*, loudly proclaiming, That thou, O God, art Lord alone; *Thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, and all their Hosts; the Earth, and all Things that are therein*; therefore be thou our Lord God for ever and ever.



SERMON XXXIII.

Of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

I J. O H N. V. 7.

For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.



T was frequently objected against Christianity by the Heathens, that it prescribed to its Followers only a lazy, stupid Faith, which bid Men barely believe, without permitting them to examine the Reasons, and search into the Grounds of it; as if it were conscious to it self that it durst not abide the severer Trial of Reason. Which Objection, if it be meant concerning the *Christian Religion* in general, is a gross Calumny.

For what Religion ever underwent a *severer Examination*? What more frequently urged its Disciples, to search into the Foundation upon which it was built? And what
more

more severely forbid those to be admitted into it, who had not duly examined it? For,

(1.) Men were bid to examine the *Nature, Quality, and Number* of its *Miracles*; which were no strange Feats or juggling Tricks, done *obscurely in a Corner*; but true and undoubted *Miracles*, done by our Saviour openly in the *Face* of the *Sun*, in the *Presence*, and by the Confession of his *Enemies*, without any visible Means, or by those which had no natural Tendency to the Producing the Effect, by the *sole Word* of his Mouth, and the bare Act of his Will.

(2.) They were bid to consider the *End* and Intent of its *Miracles*, and of its Doctrine, which was not to teach and establish any thing contrary to the *Light of Nature*, or any express *Revelation* designed by God to be of *Eternal Obligation*; but only to advance *true Virtue*, and *real Holiness*; and to teach the *Way* how Mankind should regain the *Favour* of God, and arrive at *Eternal Happiness*.

(3.) They were bid to consider, by what clear and undoubted *Evidence* all this was attested, *to wit*, by *Enemies* as well as *Friends*, by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as well as *Christians*; as by the ^a *publick Records*

^a *Parker 230. Dr. Allestr. Serm. of the Divine Authority of the Script. p. 12.*

transmitted to the *Roman Senate* by *Pontius Pilate*, extant in the Beginning of Christianity, and confidently appealed to by its primitive Apologists. By the Testimony of *Tiberius* the Emperor, who was so satisfied at the Relation he had received from *Pilate* of the *Miracles* of our Saviour, that he moved the *Senate* for his being admitted into the Number of their Gods. And, Lastly, by the general *Confession* of its *Adversaries*, who denied not the Truth of them, but attributed them to his skill in Magick and Sorcery.

As for the Christians, the Apostles and Disciples of our Saviour, who asserted the Truth of these *Miracles*, had all the Requisites which any one can desire to the Credibility of a Witness; for they could neither be deceived themselves, nor could they deceive others.

They could not be deceived themselves, because they were constant *Eye-witnesses* of his Miracles; they saw him cure those that were born Blind, and raise Men from the Dead by the Word of his Mouth. They themselves were sent to heal the *Diseases*, and work divers *Miracles*, and were *Instruments* as well as *Witnesses* in the whole Transaction; and so could not be deceived themselves.

And why should we think that they would deceive others? Why should we think

think that they would suffer *Hardship*, *Persecution*, and even *Death* it self, for that which they knew to be false, and that not out of any *worldly Interest*, but meerly out of Vain-glory, or a malicious Design to deceive others? And if some of the Chief of them were either so vain, or so malicious, how came all those who were privy to the Design, to persist in it? How came none of them, not even *Judas* himself, to betray it out of Cowardice, Lucre, or Revenge?

But granting all this, how could a *few* poor and ignorant *Tentmakers*, and *Fishermen*, propagate the *Gospel* over the whole World, in despite of the *Malice* of the *Jews*, and the Power of the *Roman Empire*, without any Force or Fraud, meerly by *Well-doing*, and *patient Suffering*? How came they to conquer the establish'd *Religions* of the World, upheld by *Force* and *Interest*? Could this be done without *Miracles*? Or if it could, would not that have been the *greater Miracle*? For this would certainly have been a Miracle above all Miracles, that the Christian Religion should prevail by the Teaching of a few poor ignorant Fishermen, against all other Arts, Power, or Policy, without ^a Miracles.

It bid them consider besides the Evidence

^a Dr. Jackson, Tom. 1. p. 12.

of its own *Prophecies*, and of those of the *Old Testament* concerning it; the *Holiness* of its Professors, the *Constancy*, Zeal, Courage, and Number of its *Martyrs*, which were so many, that the *Proconsul Pliny* justly feared the Depopulation of their Provinces.

It bid them, moreover, consider the *Efficacy* of its Doctrine, which wrought a sudden and immediate *Change* in the *Minds* of all that were not obstinately and maliciously wilful; and the great *Wonders* God wrought visibly, and in the Confession of the Heathens themselves, in its Defence, and for the Propagation of it; as the strange Eruption of Fire upon *Julian's* endeavouring to rebuild the *Temple of Jerusalem*; mentioned by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, a Heathen Historian, who lived in those Times. The Storms, Thunder, and Lightning raised by the Prayers of the Christians in the *German Expedition* under *M. Aurelius*^a. Devils frequently dispossefs'd in the Sight of the Heathens; the Silence of their own *Oracles*, and the Departure of the *evil Spirits*, which were their Gods, from their Temples and Altars, with *Groans* and *Sighs* at the *Birth* of our *Saviour*, and the Appearance of the *Light* of the *Gospel*.

^a Parker 273.

They were bid (*Lastly*) to consider the *Magnificence*, *Power*, and *Efficacy* of the *Holy Scriptures*, which leave a lasting Impression upon the Minds of Men, and are of more Force to cause them to undertake any Good, or abstain from any Evil, than all the *Philosophers Lectures* in the World; there being no *Precepts* in them which can sustain and relieve a *disconsolate Soul*, or inspire Men with such couragious *Resolutions*, fervent Desires, stedfast *Faith*, and grounded Confidence, as the Scripture can.

But if the Objection relates to the particular Doctrines of Christian Religion; and its Meaning be, that after a *Doctrine* is proved to be of *Divine Original* in general, we are to believe whatsoever is plainly and evidently contained in it, without further calling its *Truth* in Question, or trying it at the Bar of our *frail Reason*, which is subject to many Mistakes, and much uncertainty; it is a great Truth, and highly reasonable, especially if it be in Matters supernatural, or above and beyond the Sphere of our Knowledge.

Thus, for Example, the Principles and Foundations of Christian Religion being proved, *viz.*

1. That there is a God.
2. That he hath revealed his Will to Mankind in the *Gospel* of his Son; it follows, that we ought to believe *whatsoever*
ap-

appears to us to be clearly revealed in the Gospel, howsoever strange and incomprehensible the *Manner* of it at least may seem to us; because it is certain that God can and may do, and reveal such Things as are above and beyond our Reason, for otherwise he would not be infinite in Power and Knowledge.

All then that we are to do in this Case is this :

(1.) To search and examine diligently (under the Guidance of the spiritual Teachers of the Establish'd and Authorized Church of which God has made us Members, for which God by ordinary Providence must be supposed to be more than ordinarily concerned, according to the Rules of Government) whether the *Doctrine* be *plainly* and *evidently contained in Scripture* or no. And if it be, we are to yield our Assent to it, without demanding any other Motive or Topick of Proof²; it being highly reasonable that we should believe *whatsoever God has revealed* (although it be above or beside right Reason, or even contrary to our corrupt Reason) *barely upon his Authority*. For as an excellent Divine of our own has exceedingly well remarked, if such Things be not simply believed without any philo-

² Dr. Hammond, p. 193.

sophical, rational Enquiry concerning the Things affirmed in it, many will of necessity still wallow in Infidelity, after all that God hath done for the Rescuing them out of it ; and only a *few* find that by *rational Search*, which before they believed by simple Faith.

In Treating of the Reasons and Grounds upon which the Divine Authority of Christian Religion is founded, these following Things ought carefully to be distinguished.

1. The *Divine Authority* upon which it is built.

2. The *Motives of Credibility*, by which every Christian is induced to believe that it is built upon such Divine Authority.

3. The Ways and Means by which these Motives were at first made known, and are since conveyed unto us.

(1.) The *Authority* upon which *Christian Religion* is founded, is the *Testimony* of God, which is infallible ; for God being infinitely Wise and Knowing cannot be deceived, and being infinitely Good and True, cannot deceive, and therefore *his Testimony* must necessarily be infallible. This is a Thing plain and obvious, and confessed by every one who acknowledges a God ; the only Difficulty is in the two latter Things to be discussed.

(2.) The *Motives of Credibility*, by which every Christian is induced to believe, that

his *Religion* has this *Divine Testimony*, or was revealed by God; are these following.

I. *External*, which are,

(1.) Miracles.

(2.) Prophecies.

(3.) The sudden and effectual Propagation of it through the whole World, in despite of the Establish'd Religions.

(4.) The Number, Constancy, and Holiness of those who died for its Truth.

II. *Internal*, which are,

(1.) The Excellency of its Precepts.

(2.) The Efficacy of its Doctrine.

(3.) The Style.

The first and ^a chief Motive by which we are induced to believe that the Christian Religion is of *Divine Original*, is *Miracles*. For the due understanding and enforcing of which Motive, I shall distinctly consider these Things:

1. What is meant by a *Miracle*.

2. How we are to distinguish a *true Miracle* from a *false*.

3. That true and real *Miracles* are a sufficient Argument or Proof of *Divine Authority*.

^a The Point particularly insisted on is Miracles, the rest before mentioned are but briefly touched on.

(1.) By a *Miracle* (according to the Import of the Word) “ is meant a strange and “ wonderful Effect, which either deviates “ from, or is repugnant to, or exceeds the “ efficacy of the Nature of things, as they “ are established by God. Thus for Example the *Suns* (or *Earths*, if you please) standing still, is a thing beside, or deviating from the established Order of Nature: The *ascent* of a heavy Body of its own accord, is a thing contrary to the *Laws* of *Nature*, by which such things are determined to move downwards: And lastly, giving *Sight* to those that were *born blind*, raising the *Dead*, and the like, are things above the *Force* and *Power* of the *Laws* of *Nature*; that is, the general, or particular Laws of Motion impressed upon natural Bodies, or upon the Nature of Things. And that such things may be performed, must be confessed by all who acknowledge a God, that is, an Almighty and Omnipotent *Being*, who can do *every thing* that does not imply a *Contradiction*, or is not repugnant to the infinite Perfections of his Nature. Now the same Power which created, and preserves things, may, if it pleases, alter that *Order*, in which they were at first established, without any entrenchment upon the Divine Perfections. For as *Miracles* properly demonstrate God’s Power, so are they not repugnant to his *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, being always designed for *Wise* and *good Ends*: Neither is there there-

by any breach made upon his *Justice*, because he may dispose of, and do what he pleases with his own; or upon his *Veracity*, and the Immutability of his Nature or Decrees, because he hath not promised, that he will not alter the *Course* of Nature; and it is as well the purpose of his immutable Will, that there should be Events against Nature, as according to it.

And what is there in Miracles, which implies a Contradiction. For although it be impossible that a heavy Body should ascend and descend of it self at the same time, yet it is not impossible, nor any whit contradictory to the Nature of a heavy Body, that that which descended by its own natural Power, should ascend by a supernatural: For the Laws of natural Bodies being contingent, or capable of not being, as well as of being as they are, they may be changed, suspended, or annihilated, according to the pleasure of the Supreme Maker and disposer of all Things.

But this is a thing which cannot well be doubted of; the main difficulty is about the next thing proposed; to wit,

(2.) How to distinguish true Miracles from false! and the most exact *Κεφάλαιον*, or Characteristicks that I know of, are these following:

1. Those which are taken from the *Design* and *End* of the *Miracles*.

2. From

2. From the *Nature* and *Circumstances* of them.

(1.) If the Miracle be done to confirm a Doctrine *contrary* to what God has already sufficiently revealed, it is to be rejected, let it be attended with Circumstances never so strange and wonderful. And this, I say, supposing what some assert, that God may permit a *false Prophet* to work even *true* and *real Miracles*, to try the Stedfastness, Faith, and adherence of his People to what he has already sufficiently revealed; although there be some who judge it really impossible, and repugnant to the Goodness, Justice, and Truth of God, to set his own Seal to a Lye, or to any Thing contrary to the plain Light of Nature^a; yet because in such Cases, it will be perhaps very difficult to distinguish those false Wonders from true and real Miracles, I shall suppose them to be so; and then the Miracle must be supposed not to be ordained by God, to confirm the Doctrine which it attests to, because God has given sufficient Warning to the contrary. Because it cannot be supposed that God will act contrary to himself, and contradict that which he hath already sufficiently approved; for this were to leave Men in a continual Suspence, and subject

^a *Cudw.* p. 709.

them inevitably to Impostures. Whence it follows, that all *Revelations* which contradict *natural Religion*, and are contrary to the clear Light of Nature, and the *Eternal Laws* of Good and Evil, are not to be believed, although attested by Miracles; because they destroy those Principles which are to be supposed to all Revelation, and by which we alone can judge of the Truth of them. And therefore if the *End* and *Design* of such *Miracles* be to promote Atheism, Idolatry, or any Wickedness, and gross Immorality, we are confidently to reject them; because they destroy that which God has sufficiently already attested, and tend to the Advancement of those Doctrines which cannot be supposed to proceed from him. If it be objected that our Saviour's Miracles tended to confirm a *Religion* contrary to what God had already revealed to the *Jews*,

I answer, 1. That our Saviour did not *destroy*, but *fulfil* and *complete* it; he raised it to a higher Pitch than it was before, and shewed wherein the *true Meaning* and *spiritual Nature* of it consisted.

2. The *Jewish Oeconomy* was not intended by God to be perpetual, but only *temporary*, to last during that period of Time which he had allotted it. And there were several Prophecies which supposed a *new Covenant*, and Kingdom under the *Messias*,
which

which could not be compleated but under a new State and change of Things ^a.

But (2.) We may distinguish true Miracles from false from the *Circumstances* and *Nature* of the Miracle.

And *first*, We are to consider, whether the Miracle was really done or no: And herein we are not to trust common Fame or Rumour, but our own *Senses* duly qualified, upon mature Judgment and Deliberation about the Matter. For not *Sense alone*, but *Sense* and *Reason* conjoined, are the fit *κρίτηριον*, and Rules, by which we are to judge concerning Truth. Or if we did not see the Thing our selves, we are to take Care that they be attested by those who were both so prudent as not to be deceived themselves, and so honest as not to deceive us.

And if several Miracles which have passed for current, were examin'd by this Rule, we should find them to be built upon no Bottom, or a very slight one. As the Miracles of the Papists, and of the Heathens ^b.

Secondly, Whether it were really a Miracle or no, that is, whether it were truly a wonderful Effect, contrary to, and above the Power and Efficacy of natural Causes.

^a Vid. Curcell. p. 287. §. 17.

^b *Stillling.* Answ. to Discours. about Idolatry, p. 441. The Lady of Loretto, &c.

(1.) Whether it were an Effect apt to raise Wonder and Admiration; whether it were sensible, such as the Miracles of our Saviour were; for if it were not, we ought much to distrust it; because it has not the first Propriety of a Miracle, which is, to strike and move our Senses after an unwonted wonderful Manner. The Miracle of changing the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, an invisible unperceivable Miracle, and therefore of no Use. And here I think it fit to make use of St. *Chrysostom's* Distinction ^a, of θαύματα, and σημεῖα, Wonders and Signs. *Wonders* are those, which although they are beyond the Power of natural Causes, may be supposed to be done, God only permitting, by the Power of invisible created Beings, as good Angels, and evil Spirits; as if a Person wholly illiterate should speak several Languages. Σημεῖα, or *true and real Miracles*, are those which can be done only by God himself, not consenting and assisting only, but working by his own immediate Power. Such was, it seems, the turning of Dust into Lice; the preparing of so many Particles of Dust, and enlivening them, being a thing confessed by the Sorcerers and Magicians

^a *Stillington's* Discourse in Answer to Idolatry, Disc. 2. p. 577, 578.

to be the Finger of God, *Exod.* 8. 19. And so undoubtedly is the raising of a Man from Death to Life, this being the Prerogative of God alone. These are not to be done by any Creature otherwise than as acted by God, and immediately depending on him.

(2.) Whether it were contrary to, or above the Power of Nature, as those of our Saviour, which are related to be done without Means, by the Word of his Mouth, or a bare Act of his Will; or by Means no Ways conducing to produce the Effect, as *Clay* to cure the Blind, and *Spittle* to loosen the Tongue of the Dumb.

The plain Sum and Substance of all is this:

1. We are to consider the End and Design of the Miracle. 2. The Circumstances and Nature of it.

In the first Case, we are not to believe it, although it seem to have the Nature and Circumstances of a true and real Miracle, if it be produced to prove any Doctrine contrary to what God has already sufficiently attested to be of perpetual and eternal Obligation.

Lastly, The Ways and Means by which these Miracles were at first known, and were afterwards conveyed unto us.

And here, if we had lived in the Age in which these Miracles were done, we could have come ordinarily to the Knowledge of them only one of these two ways.

1. By

1. By seeing of them our selves; or, 2. By hearing them from others.

And the same Office which was performed by the Eyes and Ears of those that lived then, is now done to us by the Tradition of *Jews, Gentiles, and Christians*, who concur in these two Things.

(1.) The fulfilling of the many Prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ and his Religion, many of them delivered some thousands of Years, all of them some hundreds before Christ's coming; together with the Prophecies of Christ concerning the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the Persecutions his Followers should meet with, and the Continuance of his Church, notwithstanding all Opposition; are clear Evidences of the Divine Authority of the Scriptures; for what but infinite Wisdom comprehending all Things from the Beginning to the End of Time, could foretel so many Events, depending upon the Workings of Mens Free-Will, and such a variety of Causes and Circumstances accompanying and following it, many of them of a contrary Nature.

(2.) The great Number of undeniable Miracles wrought by our Saviour, and his Apostles, and the primitive Christians, are a sufficient Testimony of the Divine Power attending them; and are concomitant and subsequent Proofs, which the Divine Spirit
by

by these its supernatural Works hath afforded us. For what but Divine Power could cure all manner of Diseases, and raise the Dead by his bare Word or Command? And that such Miracles were done, and that the Doctrine of the Scriptures was delivered by Men who did them, is sufficiently evidenced by the Historical *Testimony* of *Enemies* as well as *Friends*, *Jews* and *Gentiles* as well as *Christians*; whose concurrent Testimony in this Matter, they being of contrary Dispositions and Interests, cannot be denied but upon the same Grounds that all History and evidence of Matter of Fact may be called in Question. And by the Testimony of all knowing Men of different Ages, Dispositions, and Interest, Enemies as well as Friends, Infidels and *Jews* as well as Christians of divers Sects and Opinions; who have unanimously agreed that there were such Persons as our Saviour and the Apostles; that they did great Miracles; and that the Scriptures are the Books in which the Doctrine of the Christian Religion was contained; which is an Evidence that cannot possibly be false, because it is impossible that Men of such contrary Interests should agree in it, any more than it is possible that all the Men then living in *England* and their Posterity should agree in this, that there was such a Man as *William* the Conqueror, and many of the
Laws

Laws of the Nation were received from him.

But (2.) I am assured of the *Divine Authority* of Christ's Religion by the actual *Conversion* of so many Nations to the Christian Religion, by the *Doctrine* delivered in that Book; which is an undeniable Evidence that they are of *Divine Authority*, and were attended with Divine Power: For how else should so many Countries have been converted by unlearned and ignorant Persons, without *secular Force* or *worldly Policy*, they using no other *Arts* to plant and promote it, but *well Living* and *patient Suffering*; especially if we consider that it was a Doctrine so contrary to their *Fleshly Lusts* and *Worldly Interest*. And it would have been the *greatest Miracle* of all, if it had been propagated *without a Miracle*.

(3.) The Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and *Excellency* of the Doctrine and *Examples*, especially that of our Saviour, delivered in Scripture, argue their *Divine Authority*. For God being a perfect Being, to which perfect Power, Wisdom, and Goodness are Essential; the more there appears of these Characters in any Thing, the more is there of the *Image* of God upon them. The *Divine Power* of Christ appeared in his *many Miracles*; and the *Divine Power* of his Gospel, in its *many miraculous Operations*
on

on the Souls of Men, *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; visible in their *Works* and *Conversacion*. The *Divine Wisdom* of *Christ*, and of his Gospel appears, in his Forming a Religion which has so high, so rational, and so agreeable an *End* for Souls to be moved to Duty by the *Eternal Enjoyment* of perfect Happiness; and means so proportionable and effectual for the Obtaining of that *End*, the Advancing of our Souls to the most perfect *Likeness* to God the Supream Good, by *Purity*, *Holiness*, and *Goodness*. The Goodness of *Christ* and of his Gospel is visible in the highest Act of Goodness, *his laying down his Life for his Enemies*; and in the whole *Frame* of his Gospel, a Doctrine whose *Essence* is *Goodness* and *Love* to God and Men, the highest Love to our selves, the Salvation of our Selves.

But (4thly.) God hath afforded *Holy Christians* a standing and undeniable *Evidence* in their own Souls of the *Divine Authority* of his Doctrine, to wit, the *inward Experience* of the Efficacy of it; which is the most Evident, and most Powerful of all others. For a Soul that hath felt it self raised from a Spiritual Death to a Spiritual Life, to have new Ends, new Principles, and a new Heart and Life, by virtue of this Doctrine, and inward transforming Influences and Operations according to it, and promised in it, cannot possibly doubt of its *Divine Authority*. And

And this *Evidence* is most industriously to be laboured after, nothing begetting and perfecting *Faith* more powerfully than its inward Workings in our Souls by *Love* and practical Piety. For the Soul by its affiance in and adherence to God, and its continual Exercise in *Meditation*, *Prayer*, and *good Works*, by degrees is made Partaker of the *Divine Nature*; it sees, feels, and tastes God's Goodness, Power, and Wisdom, by a sweet *internal Experience*, and Exercise of its inward Senses. *O come, see, and taste how Gracious God is*, says the devout Psalmist: Open thy Heart by *Holy Love* to receive his *Gracious Influences*; and in a holy Silence wait for his Loving Visits to thy Soul; hearken what God thy Lord will say unto thee, and in a lively Exercise of *Obedience* stir up all thy Faculties to a full *Resignation* of themselves to God's Grace. So may'st thou experience the *Divine Power* of the *Scriptures*, and be fully convinced of their *Divine Authority*, more than by the most powerful Arguments; and live a *Life of Faith* so here, as that thou may'st be Eternally Happy with God hereafter.

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